



MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD.

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THE MAN OF GOD

A COURSE OF LECTURES.

BY THE LATE

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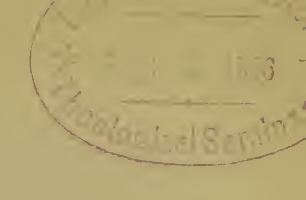
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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following Course of Lectures was delivered to the congregation of Regent Square during the winter of 1859-60.

The MSS., although not prepared for the press by the Author, bear sufficient indications of his ultimate intention to justify their publication in a collected form. Where alternative forms of expression appear in the MSS., those that seem to be the later have been retained.

LONDON, *October* 14, 1870.



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I.

The Ark of Bulrushes.

"She took for him an ark of bulrushes, . . . and put the child therein."—Ex. II. 3.

In this climate of ours there are some plants which need no culture. The thistle takes care of itself. It requires no husbandman to break up the ground and scatter the seed and drive away the fowls of heaven; but wherever there is a breeze it finds a carrier, and wherever it finds a sod it makes a home. Here are downs which have not felt the plough since the days of Alfred or Caractacus, and thistles grow on them still—the descendants of those prickly sires which were crimsoned by the blood of battling Danes or Britons in the far far distant times of old.

But if you sow any kind of corn you must take a great deal of trouble. You must cleave open and crumble the mould; you must cover it in; you must uproot the weeds that would choke it, and

you must drive away the beasts that seek to devour it. And the crop of this season, if left to itself, will insure no successor. A few straggling ears may survive for an autumn or two, but presently there is no more trace of the golden grain on your neglected meadow than there would be on the sands of the shore.

At the first God gave to mankind many great truths and lessons: the knowledge of Himself as the Father of spirits, holy, beneficent, forgiving; the great rules of piety and virtue; and above all, the promise, so gracious and animating, of a coming Deliverer from sin and from sorrow—a promise which, as a blessed element of hope and elasticity, should keep man's face still upward, and his heart still strong for his toils and trials. All these God gave, and at the first He flung them broadcast. They were public property, and at the first were intrusted to the general memory. But this was enough to show that for saving truths the mind of man has ceased to be the proper soil; for knowledge heaven-descended earth is no longer a congenial clime. "Thistles grow instead of wheat." Ambition, revenge, cruelty, falsehood, rapine, float through all the atmosphere, and these can spring up anywhere: not so integrity, truth, chastity, respect for the rights of others, brotherly-kindness: and midway betwixt the Creation and the Advent the world had sunk

into such a depth of idolatry and immorality as to make it perfectly plain that on the self-propagating principle those precious seeds which had been carried away from Eden would soon disappear altogether. For the bread of life there was too little appetite to intrust its preservation any longer to the careless and promiscuous multitude,—the sin-loving, God-forsaking, demon-adoring nations of mankind.

Accordingly, at this period the Most High, in His wisdom, took means for the conservation of the priceless blessing. Instead of dealing any longer with the millions of the race—instead of emptying garners of truth over fens and swamps which engulfed the seed and yielded no return—He took in "a little piece of holy ground." He laid hold of one family, and selected it as the recipient and custodier of Divine Revelation. By a very remarkable process He fenced in and secluded that family, making it a peculiar people, dwelling alone, and not reckoned among the nations; and when the great purpose was answered, and the wall of separation was broken down, it was on the hills of Palestine that the handful of corn was found which now waves on our English fields, and will yet make all the mountains of the earth like Lebanon.

When trying to Christianize a deeply sunken community—Fijians or Savage Islanders—it is some-

times a good plan to get hold of one or two of the natives, and bring them to an adjacent mission-settlement, where they may be taught and trained, and then, with the help of these native pioneers, the missionaries find their work exceedingly facilitated. So in His great process of reclaiming a sunken *world*, the Lord laid hold of one particular *family*. He raised up the righteous man from the East, and called him to His feet. From the surrounding grossness and superstition He snatched away that family, and after a dreary probation in the desert—after a long discipline in the Reformatory of that great wilderness,—He promoted it to the pleasant school of Palestine. "The mill of God grinds slowly," and it took a thousand years before the pupil nation was ready to give its lesson to mankind. But at last, thoroughly weaned from idolatry, with the unity and the spirituality of the Godhead engraven on its inmost conviction, with that essence of all ethics—the Ten Commands—familiar as the alphabet, by daily usages inured to those expiatory and mediatorial ideas which lie at the root of God's method with mankind, and by accumulating and converging prophecies not only taught to expect the Saviour, but looking for His arrival with nervous excitement,—above all, with a text-book in its hands infinitely holier and wiser than itself,—the old scholar was now ready to act

the part of teacher and evangelist, and go forth as God's own missionary, in the person of its more enlightened members able to tell to Greeks and Romans even such unheard-of wonders as Jesus and the Resurrection.

A few years ago we gave a course of lectures on the Father of the Hebrew Family. We now purpose to accompany in his career the Founder of the Hebrew Nationality—that great Liberator and Lawgiver who fulfilled a more important function than any other man in the ages before Messiah.

Abraham and his immediate descendants were shepherds, and they were that kind of shepherds whom we call *nomads.* It was no object of theirs to cultivate land or build houses, or in any way improve the country where they sojourned. They drove their flocks to any spot where grass and water could be found, and as soon as the herbage of that region was consumed, they packed up their canvas village, and moved on till pastures green invited them to halt once more. But with their migratory habits they had no inducement to sow fields and plant vineyards, nor did it suit their purpose to rear dwellings of stone or temples for worship. They wanted portable houses which could accompany their cattle; and, if they were rich, they invested their wealth not in handsome buildings and spacious gardens and bulky furniture, but in

jewels and costly robes, which were not cumbrous to carry. But for this roving unresting people the Lord had selected a land which pre-eminently needed settled habits and the arts of mechanic industry. To treat Palestine as a mere sheep-walk would be to throw it utterly away. It was "a land for wheat and barley; for vines and fig-trees and pomegranates; a land of oil, olive, and honey; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills brass might be dug." But Jacob and his sons were incapable of turning to account such a land. They were neither horticulturists nor farmers nor metallurgists, and in order to do justice to their goodly heritage it was needful that the shepherds should learn to be farmers and workers in stone and in wood, in clay and in metal. Accordingly, He who had provided the land for His people took means to prepare the people for the land,—means wonderfully marked by His own foreknowledge and wisdom. After giving the favoured family a glimpse of their promised and predestined home, the Lord removed them to a land where they might be trained and qualified so as to make the most of Palestine when once they should obtain final possession. Egypt was then the most advanced and enlightened of all lands,—its exhaustless soil waving with crops and over-canopied by palms and pomegranates, and its cities stupendous with colossal

temples and palaces in which art emulated the immensity and indestructibility of nature. Proficients in masonry and in the fictile arts, weaving that fine linen which all antiquity regarded as a glory of the loom, and rearing those enormous structures which are still a wonder to the world,—musicians, armourers, jewellers,—there was scarcely an art which its industrious citizens did not practise, and which might not there be learned by any observant visitor who possessed a passport to their favour. With such a passport the Lord provided Jacob and his sons. "He sent a man before them," and through the popularity and power of Joseph, Egypt, usually so jealous of strangers, gave hearty welcome to its benefactor's kinsmen. Assigned a region which should be all their own, the length and breadth of the land were before them, and the Aholiabs and Bezaleels who should arise were free to copy each Egyptian craft and mystery.[1]

In the succinct Bible summary, four hundred years are passed over in one breath, and an expression of Stephen (Acts vii. 6) would seem to indicate that during *all* these years the Israelites

[1] For practising some of their acquisitions,—"labour in the field," —the forty years in the desert gave small opportunity. But such knowledge is transmitted from sire to son ; and in the meanwhile four hundred years of Egypt had gone far to alter early habits and change the shepherds into agriculturists and artificers. The Tabernacle, the Golden Calf, etc., show that handicrafts were practised.

had been "evil-entreated." But when we look into it more carefully, we shall find that the evil treatment only began at the close of the period. As long as Joseph was remembered, and as long as the dynasty continued on the throne who had been so deeply Joseph's debtors, the Hebrews were protected and befriended. "They were fruitful and increased abundantly, and multiplied and waxed exceeding mighty;" and far from continuing cooped up in their own Goshen, they spread over the country, "and the land was filled with them." They were so prosperous and so exceedingly numerous that at last a sovereign—most likely of a new race of kings—grew apprehensive of their ascendancy. He said to his people, "Behold, the children of Israel are more and mightier than we;" and for fear that in the event of a war they should make common cause with the invader, he adopted towards them a rigid and repressive policy. Their spirit, and their very lives, he tried to crush out by tremendous toils; and when the brick-kilns and the burning sun were not ridding him fast enough of the dangerous foreigners, he promulgated one of those ordinances which make tyranny so terrible, and commanded that henceforward every male child of Hebrew parentage should perish as soon as born.

There have been many commentaries written on

the Book of Exodus; but by far the most interesting and remarkable is one for which we are indebted to Pharaoh himself—that pictorial Bible executed by order of the kings of Egypt, and preserved for three thousand years bright and clear beneath the sands of the Libyan desert. There we learn how Egypt was invaded and for a time conquered and held down by a race of shepherd-kings from Arabia—a disgrace and disaster which made shepherds an abomination to the Egyptians, and which rendered the Egyptians especially nervous at the increase within their borders of a shepherd-race, the kinsmen of their shepherd conquerors. There we have preserved countless specimens of such bricks as the Hebrews made—bricks sun-dried, with chaff or straw mixed throughout their substance to make them more tenacious. There we have depicted groups of foreign bondmen, measuring out the clay, moulding it into blocks, carrying away on yokes the finished bricks, and piling them under the eye of an Egyptian taskmaster, who, rod in hand, sits at his ease and looks on in leisure. There too we have numberless examples of the arrogance and cruelty of the Egyptians, trampling on the necks of their enemies; and there we read inscriptions on temples and palaces, boasting how in the construction of those gigantic fabrics nc native Egyptian had been employed, but that they

were all the work of foreigners. And there, "with a pen of iron, written in the rock for ever," we have the Pagan's attestation to a thousand minutiæ in the Pentateuch—a sculptured panorama at which we shall hereafter have occasion to glance when we wish to know the meaning of many a scriptural allusion, as well as to know the abode in which the hero of our history spent the morning of his days.

The edict of Pharaoh had not long been issued before it fell in all its bitterness on a family of the house of Levi. In that family there was already a boy three or four years of age, who had the good fortune to be born before the reign of terror; and there was also a little girl twice the age—a clever, dark-eyed maiden, with a fine ear for music, and with her sensible active ways the help and comfort of her mother. But now, when there ought to have been great joy in the house, for another son was born into it, all was hushed and silent. No neighbour came to congratulate, and it was anything but pride which the poor mother felt as she gazed on her "proper child." Day after day passed on, and every day the babe grew more endearing and more beautiful; but every day made concealment more difficult. It was a wonder that no spy nor informant had yet found out the fatal secret; every foot-fall at the door sent panic

through the house; and sometimes it was impossible to hush those infant outcries, which, if overheard, would attract the murderer to the cradle and be the death of every one of them. This anxiety could not last. The babe was three months old, when one day Jochebed took a basket of papyrus, such as might have long been used for household purposes, and began to make it ready. As with pitch she filled the chinks and made it water-tight, as she lined the interior with bitumen, and smoothed and polished it so carefully, the tears ran down, and the little Mary wondered what her mother could intend to do with it. At last all was finished, and in the early morning they set off for the river-side. Jochebed told her daughter what the basket was intended for, and you may be sure it was with a bursting heart that the sister thought of the likely fate of that baby-brother whom she had so often helped to nurse and dandle. But here was a quiet spot on the water's edge, where the reeds grew tall and the current hardly came; and why not here? "By faith her child had been hid three months," notwithstanding "the king's commandment," and the same faith which had kept up the timid mother's heart through many real dangers and false alarms had moved her to prepare this ark; and although the shore was desolate and the crocodiles were hungry—though her cheeks were

pale and the sword was piercing through her soul, —that true daughter of Abraham still could trust in God, and cherished in her heart some vague hope of which her "prepared ark" was sign and sacrament. And now, the last meal given, and the babe adjusted in his new strange cradle, the last kiss imprinted on his broad untroubled brow, and the last look of maternal agony upturned towards Israel's God, Miriam took her hidden post of observation and the wife of Amram tore herself away.

But she had not long been home when Miriam burst into the house, too wild and agitated to tell all the happy tale, but bidding her mother haste and come. And there, sure enough, they were—a group of ladies grandly dressed around the weeping boy, and one of them the king's own daughter, and from amidst her laughing, wondering maidens, turning round to Jochebed, the princess said, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." Oh what an evening that would be in Amram's cottage! How eagerly they all by turns would embrace and coax the little outcast! How secure the joy of the happy mother as she clasped her own darling, safe beneath the shadow of the throne! How often would Miriam tell over the adventures of the morning; her "frights" with vultures and with what at first seemed crocodiles;

her wonder when the five ladies came at last in sight, walking along the bank, whether they would notice anything, and how she rather thought that they would have passed on, if just then the baby had not begun to cry; and how she herself had contrived to come up as if by chance at the very moment, and how the princess looked so good and pitiful, and how she, the sensible and self-possessed little Miriam, had offered to run and get a nurse for the noisy unappeasable foundling! And oh! how heartfelt would be the thanksgiving to the God of Abraham which arose that evening from beneath the roof of that humble Hebrew dwelling, for the lost one had been found; this their son who had been dead was alive again; the ark of bulrushes was transformed into a golden cradle, and, guided by a Hand Divine, had landed its helpless freight in no monster's jaws, but on the very steps of Pharaoh's throne.

Singular preservations like this have marked the infancy of many who afterwards grew memorable. Every one will recall the story of Romulus and Remus, nursed by a wolf, and thus preserved to lay the foundations of Rome and the Roman empire; and the readers of Herodotus will remember how he tells that Astyages ordered his infant grandson to be thrown out into the wilderness, but how a shepherd's wife, whose own babe was dead, adopted the

"goodly child,"[1] and so saved from the hyænas that Cyrus who was to create the Medo-Persian monarchy, and fill so large a space in history. And every one is now familiar with the legend of our own king Arthur, revived as it has been by the Laureate :—

"No man knew from whence he came ;
But after tempest, when the long wave broke
All down the thundering shores of Bude and Boss,
There came a day as still as heaven, and then
They found a naked child upon the sands
Of wild Dundagil by the Cornish sea ;
And that was Arthur ; and they fostered him
Till he by miracle was approven king."[2]

Conceding, however, that these tales are legends,—confused echoes, possibly, from the story now under consideration,—it is well to note how often in their precarious outset precious lives have been preserved from imminent danger, and sometimes by what we deem a trivial circumstance. In the beginning of last century, in the house of a London tradesman, a babe was born who looked so inanimate and insignificant that it was taken for granted he was dead, when afterwards gazing at the tiny form an attendant noticed a gentle movement in the chest, and her efforts were rewarded by fostering into life

[1] Like Moses, τὸ παιδίον μέγα τε καὶ εὐειδὲς.—HEROD. i. 112.

[2] Tennyson's *Idylls*, p. 240. For similar stories see Suetonii *Augustus*, c. 95, and the Tamul tale (referred to by Ewald) in B. Schmid's *Zerstreute Blätter* (1843), st. 2.

the author of *The Rise and Progress.* Contemporary with Philip Doddridge there was growing up in a parsonage of Lincolnshire a boy of great promise who had already reached his sixth summer, when the rectory took fire; all awoke in time and saved themselves, but the little boy was forgotten, or rather, it was left to God Himself to save him, and the "brand plucked from the burning" grew up to be the founder of English Methodism. A poor woman in the town of Stirling sprang up from her spinning-wheel with an impression on her mind that her child had fallen into a neighbouring well. She was just in time to snatch hold of a lint-white head which had not yet disappeared, but which was no child of her own but the minister's son, Tommy Randall, afterwards abundantly known as the benevolent and noble-minded Dr. Davidson of Edinburgh.

We forget it as regards ourselves, but we see and feel it in our children. Surely a special Providence superintends them, and in their hands angels bear them up, lest at any time they dash their foot against a stone. Playing with the cockatrice; putting their hand on the lion's mane; making toys of edge-tools, and rolling down-hill live shells; scrambling up precipices, and falling out from open windows; swept a helpless bundle down the swollen torrent, or picked up from beneath the carriage-wheels;

restored from desperate sickness or preserved amidst frightful accidents,—what mother is there who, at some moment, has not felt like the Alpine peasant when she saw the eagle sailing overhead with her infant in its talons? Who that has not once and again shrieked out in helpless agony, and then wildly laughed or wept at the marvellous preservation? Who is there that has a son grown up who does not acknowledge that he is the child of Providence? And who is there that has grown up himself but says with Addison:—

> "When in the slipp'ry paths of youth
> With heedless steps I ran;
> Thine arm, unseen, convey'd me safe,
> And led me up to man:
> Through hidden dangers, toils, and deaths,
> It gently clear'd my way;
> And through the pleasing snares of vice,
> More to be feared than they."

Nobody knows the original name of Amram's second son; the name his parents gave him became entirely superseded and absorbed in the name which the princess gave him. And so any prized possession which we have succeeded in acquiring, or in long retaining, has attached to it, usually speaking, some circumstance of wonder or surprise in its bestowment or restoration. From a thing so small as some earthly possession, up to a thing so great as the salvation of the soul, it is a salvage from the

flames; like Joshua the high priest, "a brand plucked from the fire:" it is a gift from the flood, you name it Moses, and say, "Because I drew it out of the water."

The time of Moses' birth is one of the most instructive incidents in this history. We have no reason to suppose that the exterminating edict of the king remained in force for any considerable period. It did not exist when Moses' own brother was born, three or four years before, and if it had been in active operation for any length of time, it is utterly impossible that there could have been 600,000 grown-up males ready to accompany Moses in the march from Egypt. Much likelier is it that this was one of those frantic expedients to which despotism resorts in a moment of rage, and which after a while its myrmidons cease to execute, and are right in their calculation that it will not be renewed. Not improbably the decree became a dead letter soon after Moses was taken up and adopted by Pharaoh's daughter, and there can be no doubt that it had only newly come forth when Moses was born. In any case, it was the most dismal moment in the history of Israel's bondage—the very noon of Hebrew night; and it was the moment when the man was born who should put an end to it all. Israel's extremity was God's opportunity; and the wrath of Pharaoh wrought the purpose of Jehovah. But for

that bloodthirsty decree the son of Amram might have grown up a peasant and a bondsman, but this decree promoted him to the palace, and trained him to be the deliverer of his countrymen, the conqueror of Egypt, and the death of Pharaoh's successor.

Such is God's method. The darker the cloud, the more brilliant the rainbow; the wilder the storm, the more welcome the haven; the more desperate the danger, the more delightful is the sense of deliverance and the more rapturous the thanks of the rescued. And so in His wisdom the Most High sometimes allows His people to reach the sorest pass before He breaks the silence and makes bare His mighty arm. Not only does He allow the bottle to be spent, but the dying boy to be cast away beneath the bushes, before Hagar's eyes are opened on the well. Not only does He allow Joseph to be sold into slavery, but to be flung into a dungeon and forgotten, before He calls him to the steps of the throne and the smiles of the monarch. Not only does He suffer the Holy Land to be invaded, but Jerusalem to be hopelessly invested, before the angel of death spreads his wings and exterminates the host of Sennacherib.[1] Not only does He permit the plot against the Jews to mature, but the scaffold for Mordecai is erected, before God gives the signal,

[1] Oosterzee, p. 10.

and on His people's enemies executes vengeance. Not only does He permit a hostile king to take the crown, but He lets the bondage begin, and the brick-kilns glow fiercer, and the murderous edict come forth, before the knell of tyranny is rung, and Moses is born. And so, if you have a clear precept to start you off, and plain promises to keep you going, do not fear though the path should grow precarious and narrow, do not flinch though dangers should swarm and multiply. It is the valley of Achor, trouble in every step, and a wall of rock in front,—a rock which no agility can climb nor any strength can penetrate. But in faith and fearlessness go forward, and as you reach the barrier a door of hope will open, and usher you into an elysium of repose or a paradise of beauty. If you have a plain intimation of God's will, you need be afraid of no king's commandment, for that God in whom you trust will find means to protect His own; and when He has a purpose to fulfil He can make the Nile-monster a nursing mother, and for Pharaoh's victims create a shield in Pharaoh's daughter.

So we leave safely landed the little papyrus boat, the ark of bulrushes,—which grows mystic as we gaze, and makes us think of other arks which have gone God's voyages, and, like the babe that sailed away from a bond-mother's arms to the bosom of a princess, have carried their freight to a brilliant

haven. And not so much that colossal ark, which from out of a cursed and God-forsaken world, and across the ferry of the Flood, carried Noah and his family into that new and more favoured world which God would curse no more, and on which, in the person of Incarnate Deity, unimagined blessing was destined to descend: not so much of it as of that other ark in which this great advent was effected—the manger which, not to Egyptian maids, but to Eastern sages, disclosed not Moses, but Messiah, that infant of days whose name should expand into "The Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God;" and who, emerging from that manger, is ascended to the right hand of the Father, a Prince and a Saviour, and will return on His great white throne. And it makes us think of that papyrus ark to which infinite wisdom has intrusted the revelation of Himself—the parchment scroll, the paper book, the poor frail vehicle which, launched on the tide of Time, has had so many escapes from the chances of the stream, as well as the fury of its foes, but is now escaped from the house of bondage, and made a blessing to all nations. And as we see the mournful mother carrying

> "Her babe, close cradled in her arms,
> To Nile's green sloping shore,"

and intrusting it to the unfriendly-looking flood, little witting of the surprise which in a few hours

awaited her, so we think of the rapture that awaits many a Christian parent, who in tears has stood over that sorrowful ark, the coffin of her child, and think of her joy and her wonder when the loved one, who in the earthly dwelling makes " a blank so large," is recognised in the palace of Heaven's own King.

II.

The Father of Chivalry.

"Moses . . . was mighty in words and in deeds."
ACTS VII. 22.

A MAGNIFICENT land was the Egypt in the midst of which Moses grew up. With an atmosphere clear and dry, with a soil which no harvests could exhaust, with towns and temples at every bend of the river emerging from the midst of the great garden into which the surface had been carefully cultured, and with its bountiful Nile flowing on beneath the scented lotus, or spreading over the plain, with all the wealth of its far-travelled waters, nothing could be a more perfect symbol of prosperity and self-sufficing abundance, whilst a peculiar architecture imparted to it all an air of wonderful grandeur. That architecture was chiefly monuments and temples. The abodes of the living were sufficiently simple, but all the wealth and genius of the country were exerted to embody their ideas of immortality, and to do homage to the powers unseen. Already, in the days of Moses, the pyramid of Cheops had

stood for nearly a thousand years—a mountain of masonry a furlong in length and breadth; and in temples which covered acres of land, and where colossal figures towered up a hundred feet in height, sculpture did its best to rescue kingly memories from the tooth of Time, and awaken in the spectator's mind awful ideas of the immense and invisible, so that all the opulence and activity of the present were visibly linked to a remote and stupendous past, and through the sunny stir of the passing hour there fell constant and gigantic shadows from the surrounding "silent land."

The people who then inhabited this country,—and since then three millenniums and a half have passed away,—were more refined and intelligent than any race of which we possess the memorials. But when we say this we speak of the privileged orders: for just as the soil was the property of the sovereign, so learning was the monopoly of the priests or professional caste, and in all likelihood the mass of the people were as poor and ignorant as they usually were under all the ancient despotisms. But by the arrangements of Providence Moses was brought up a member of the privileged class. Adopted by one of the royal family, his princess-mother obtained for him the best instructors. He would be taught to read the curious character to which Egyptian sages had consigned their speculations and their learning,

and his own meditations he would be taught to consign to a scroll of papyrus. In that geometry which the land-surveying exigencies of their inundated land made so necessary, and in the cognate astronomy in which they were wonderful adepts, it is likely that he would be in due time initiated; and from the fact that he was afterwards able to reduce a golden image to dust, it has been surmised that he was no stranger to the processes of their practical chemistry, which had already presented them with glass and bronze and many pure and exquisite pigments. At the same time it is right to confess that a great deal of that Egyptian wisdom was the merest foolishness, and, if Moses ever mastered it, it would seem to have dropped from the memory of his more enlightened years, as baby gewgaws drop from the open hand of manhood; and of their historical mythology there is no more trace in the Book of Genesis than there is in the worship of Jehovah trace of their ridiculous idolatry.

But Moses was not only a scholar; as years went on he had an opportunity of earning distinction as a warrior. According to Josephus, and we have no reason to doubt the correctness of his statement, the Ethiopians made an incursion into Egypt, and routed the army which was sent to resist them. Panic spread over the country, and Pharaoh trembled at the approach of the swarthy savages, who were

already close to Memphis. The oracles were consulted; that is to say, advice was asked from the best-informed and most sagacious body of men in the capital,—the heads of the priesthood; and, well aware of his remarkable abilities, they advised that the command should be intrusted to Moses. He immediately took the field, and by a rapid though round-about march surprised the enemy, defeated them with heavy slaughter, drove them back into their own territories, and followed them up so hard, capturing one city after another, that they found no asylum till they reached the swamp-girdled city of Meroë. Here Moses lay down with his army, and would have found the blockade both tedious and difficult had he not happened to gain the affections of an Ethiopian lady, whom he promised to marry provided she put them in the way to gain possession of the city. Her admiration of the handsome Hebrew was too strong for her patriotism, and the conqueror returned from his triumphant campaign, bringing with him his sable princess and the spoils of Meroë, and filling the minds of all his fellow-countrymen with hope and exultation.[1]

The substantial truth of this statement there is no reason to doubt. It could be no invention of Josephus, and it is adopted by Irenæus, a Christian father of the second century, and receives incidental

[1] Josephus, *Antiquities*, book ii. chap. 10.

confirmation from the fact that Stephen speaks of Moses as "mighty in words and in *deeds*,"—a man of brilliant achievements whilst still a resident at the Egyptian court, and it is still more confirmed by Moses himself, who casually mentions that his wife was a native of Ethiopia.[1] With the capacity which Moses had by this time abundantly indicated, and with the position which he occupied so near the person of the sovereign, nothing could be more natural than to intrust him with the command of an important expedition; nor is the probability diminished by the hint which Josephus gives, that the counsellors who suggested it calculated on one if not both of two alternatives: they were bound to hope that Moses might rid Egypt of the invader; if not, they would not be sorry that the invaders should rid themselves of an unwelcome rival and the court of Pharaoh of a powerful and dangerous upstart.

In some respects the nearest modern counterpart to Moses was that great Prince of Orange known to history as William the Self-contained or Silent. Like Moses, the son of a pious mother, her lessons were not lost, but for a long time they continued latent. Like Moses, he soon left his home, and in early boyhood became a page to the great Emperor Charles the Fifth. The shrewd old Kaiser soon perceived the wonderful depth and quickness of the child, and by the time he was fifteen years of

[1] Numb. xii. 1.

age, the page had become a sort of privy councillor—present at the most confidential interviews, and master of all the Emperor's policy. Under the ablest tutor of the time, he learned a science far more arduous than Egyptian hieroglyphics, till he could read at a glance the hearts of princes, and from the lies of statesmen could enucleate their meaning and their motive; and under the greatest captain of the age he learned to be the cautious campaigner and the resourceful warrior;—such a favourite pupil that when the famous abdication took place it was on William's shoulder that the feeble Emperor leaned his hand whilst addressing the States-General. Charles resigned—Charles, who with his exterminating edicts and remorseless executions had been a Pharaoh to the Protestants; Charles resigned, and was succeeded by a Pharaoh of narrower intellect and harder heart—Philip the Second. But all this while William was the gay and hilarious courtier, captivating every acquaintance by his exquisite address, and charming wide circles by the bright overflow of spirits on which no burden pressed. When one day hunting with the King of France in the forest of Vincennes, as the two rode along together, Henry told William of a secret league into which Henry of France had entered with Philip of Spain to extinguish Protestantism throughout Europe, by extirpating every Protestant. Too good a

diplomatist to gasp or change colour at the astounding disclosure, William rode on and finished the hunt; but took the first opportunity to gallop off with his terrible secret. The doom that hung over his fellow-subjects in Holland roused all his patriotism, and by and bye the lessons of his pious mother revived in his emancipation from Popery; and turning to account the lessons of soldiership and diplomacy which he had learned from his grim old tutor, in the hand of God he became the instrument to shatter the Romish league, to stultify the Pope, to roll back the hosts of Philip, to break the yoke of Spain, and lead forth to freedom the Seven United Provinces,—the Moses of a modern Exodus.

So we can quite conceive that it was his very success which precipitated the decision of the son of Amram and expedited his flight from the halls of Pharaoh. With his acknowledged ability, with his influential position, and still more with his military renown, it would have been natural for his compatriots to look up to him as their guardian and protector; and "he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them."[1] But if "his brethren" understood not, the more perspicacious Egyptians would form their own conclusion, and the unscrupulous Pharaoh would have his fears. As the Jewish antiquarian tells us, "After being saved from the

[1] Acts vii. 25.

Ethiopians by Moses, the Egyptians began to hate him, and feared that he might stir up sedition and effect a revolution in the land; and, instigated by the sacred scribes, the king at last sought to slay him." The fear was not preposterous. These Hebrews had a mysterious aptitude for rising; and as a slave of this nation had once risen to be viceroy, who could tell but this fortunate foundling might aspire a step higher, and seek to be king? He had already commanded an army, and were there not scattered through the land half a million of his brethren ready to rise at his summons?

In any case his growing importance made decision more urgent, and if he was to continue at court, if he was to insure his own safety, there was now no option: he must conform to the established religion, he must bow to the idols, he must become out and out an Egyptian. It was a solemn alternative. On the one side, Egypt with its treasures, the prospect of rising to the highest rank in a nation the most renowned and the proudest of the earth, the society of sages, the splendours of a palace, the glories of a princely equipage passing through the admiring populace amidst shouts of "Bow the knee!" and, on the other, Goshen, with its slaves, the fellowship of thralls, with all generosity and spirit, all taste and intelligence crushed out of them, with bread of tears in lieu of royal dainties, and instead of floating down the Nile in

a golden barge amidst the strains of voluptuous music, scorching in the brick-field amidst the groans of companions in captivity. But these bondmen were his brethren; their God, and not Osiris, was the true God; and afflicted and depressed as they presently were, their God had promised to deliver them; and who could tell but He might honour Moses himself to be their deliverer? So farewell Memphis; farewell kind foster-mother; farewell gloomy and fitful Pharaoh; farewell, ye dreams of ambition; ye prospects of greatness and pleasures of sin, farewell!

A noble decision! Affliction with the people of God he preferred to the pleasures of sin, and reproach as one of Messiah's people he deemed greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. And the sequel proves him right. The day that he renounced his earthly prospects God served him heir to an inheritance incorruptible and which fadeth not away; and for ages past his solitary name has outshone all the monarchs combined of the one-and-thirty dynasties.

On his benevolent errand he reached the head-quarters of his countrymen. He examined into their circumstances, and found their position abundantly degraded and distressing. No doubt he did what he could to comfort them, and if he had brought away aught of his wonted wealth from the capital, we may

be sure that words would not be his only consolation; but as he "looked on their burdens" his generous spirit boiled with indignation, and he could ill repress the inward rage awakened as coarse ruffians jeered and buffeted his brethren, and, like "dumb, driven cattle," forced to their tasks with heavy blows steps weak with age or staggering with infirmity. At last he came up one day as one of these sturdy tyrants was striking a Hebrew, possibly a kinsman of his own.[1] With a quick glance he satisfied himself that there were no witnesses in sight, and, Hebrew as he was, he stepped forth his brother's champion. To Moses the man "mighty in deeds," it was a small affair to fell the caitiff, and a few moments sufficed to obliterate all trace by hiding the body in the sand. But oppression demoralizes its victims. In taking his own high spirit as the rule, Moses miscalculated the mettle of his countrymen. Not only was there no readiness to rise against their taskmasters, but there was no honourable feeling amongst themselves. The man whom his ready stroke had rescued from blows and bruises, and perhaps from death, had compromised his benefactor's life by noising abroad the matter; and when on a subsequent occasion he sought to separate two Hebrew combatants, he was met with the rough retort, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over

[1] Ex. ii. 11—"One of his brethren."

us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" And soon finding that the affair had reached the ears and roused the wrath of Pharaoh, nothing remained to Moses but to seek safety in flight.

For his subsequent asylum Moses was indebted to Eastern hospitality and his own chivalry. Of that hospitality the traces still continue in these unchanging regions. A French traveller (M. Poujoulat) who had made himself at home in the desert, tells us how he one day rode up to the tent of a sheikh near Hebron. "I am tired with my journey, and when I saw your tents I blessed God." "You are welcome," replied the sheikh; "a guest is a favour from Heaven; rest you in safety." And finding, on longer acquaintance, what an enthusiast for Arab life was his visitor, how he preferred the tents of Kedar to the palaces of France, the old Bedouin would not allow him to go away; and it was only on the third morning that he could extricate himself from the affectionate embrace of the Arab, who asked him, with tears in his eyes, "Why leave me? My tent and my flock shall be yours, and if you wish to have a wife, there is my daughter." [1]

In some such fashion was Moses invited into the tent of the priest or chieftain of Midian, only that he had rendered a service which well entitled him

[1] "Corresp. d'Orient," quoted in Migué's *Dictionnaire de la Bible.*

to a distinguished reception. He had now fairly escaped from Egypt, and had nothing to fear from Pharaoh, but he was a houseless wanderer—

> "The world was all before him, where to choose
> His place of rest, and Providence his guide."

That Providence conducted him to a silent and lonely region beyond the nearer branch of the Red Sea—a district extremely desolate and solemn—lofty mountains raising their sharp ribs and bald summits far into the sky; and where, if his bag of dates and water-sack were not spent, the pilgrim might pass many days without ever encountering the "human face divine;" seldom a living creature to be seen except the lizard looking timidly from under the stone, or a coney as timid venturing forth for a furtive nibble in the cool of the day; seldom a sound to be heard, except the rare murmur of the bee among the acacia blooms, or the tinkle of the sand as it slid tunefully down the slopes of the granite—the desert's musical hour-glass—an oratory vast and tranquil and unprofaned, and with its absence of idols pleasant contrast to Egypt—where, for the next forty years, Moses was destined to spend many a day of exalted communion with Abraham's God and his own; and where, before the history ended, he should see the mountains shake, and hear those hushed valleys re-echo to the trumpet of angels and the voice of Jehovah.

One day he had reached a little oasis. There was pasture in the district, and if there were people they would be sure to come to the well. As Moses sat waiting, the first who arrived were seven sisters, who proceeded to draw water from the well and pour it into a trough, that the sheep might get their daily drink; but they had no sooner filled the trough than a set of rude fellows came up and drove forward their flock to appropriate the precious supply. With his native gallantry and his high-spirited resistance to wrong, Moses felt outraged, and whether it was awe for the magnificent man, or respect for his Egyptian uniform, the churls fell back and conceded to the terrible stranger what they would not have yielded to manly feeling, or even the more commonplace regard for fair play: a characteristic action which introduced its gallant author to Raguel or Jethro, and which was rewarded with a home in a good man's house, and in the midst of a family where the true God was feared and worshipped.

We hereafter read that "the man Moses was exceeding meek." At first sight the actions which we have now been observing seem hardly consistent with such a character, and, like that son of thunder and summoner of fire from heaven who softened down into the beloved and loving apostle, we might be apt to suppose that, in the case of Moses, the hot spirit of the youthful soldier had

mellowed down at last into the meekness of the law-giver. 'Tis possible; yet we are loath to concede that the ingredients are incompatible: courage on the one side, with instant and energetic resistance to the wrong inflicted on others; and on the other side patience, gentleness, and much endurance. As the great Lord Erskine said, "I never knew a man remarkable for heroic bearing, whose very aspect was not lighted up by gentleness and humanity; nor a *kill-and-eat-him* countenance that did not cover the heart of a bully or poltroon." And so to our conception the man Moses with the meekness or magnanimity which could bear any amount of personal abuse and obloquy, but with blood ready to rush up in the cause of the oppressed and feeble, in the quarrel of weak women or down-trampled slaves, counting no odds and fearing no consequence, stands forth the highest type of heroism, the presage of what in later times came to be known as Christian chivalry.

And, my friends, a chivalry truly Christian is one of the noblest forms which goodness can assume; and although what commonly goes by the name was soon caricatured and perished, in its origin it was a noble effort. On the trunk of old Teutonism it was an effort to engraft the Christian graces; those rugged blood-splashed warriors from Scandinavian fiords and German forests, so fierce

and cruel that when Ulfilas translated the Bible into Gothic he left out the wars of the Israelites for fear of worse inflaming their thirst of slaughter —it was an effort to soften into manliness those bulls of Bashan, an effort to take up and turn into right channels, and thus to sanctify, the martial instinct, so deep in hot redundant natures. So after watching his arms in a church all night—after musing and praying over the high career before him—on the morrow when the knight was to receive his spurs he placed his hands between the hands of the sovereign, and swore "to speak the truth, to succour the helpless and oppressed, and never to turn back from an enemy"—or, as it was sometimes expanded,

> "To teach the heathen and uphold the Christ;
> To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
> To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
> To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
> To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
> And worship her by years of noble deeds,
> Until they won her."[1]

And although, as we have said, human depravity proved too strong for knightly vows—although by and bye some orders had to be broken up for their intolerable crimes, and the system itself became a fair subject for ridicule—in its outset the institution went far to humanize Europe and redeem its

[1] Tennyson's *Idylls.*

most dismal era. And in order to understand what was the ideal, what was expected from the wearer of the hard-won badge, we have only to read the descriptions in our older minstrelsy. For example, take Chaucer :—

> " A knight ther was, and that a worthy man,
> That fro the time that he firste began
> To riden out, he loved chevalrie,
> Trouthe and honour, fredom and curtesie.
> And of his port, as *meke* as is a mayde,
> He never yet no vilanie ne sayde
> In alle his lif, until no manere wight,
> He was a veray parfit gentil knight."

And of a type still higher the hero of the first book of the *Faery Queen* :—

> " A gentle knight was pricking on the plaine,
> Yclad in mightie armes and silver shielde. . . .
> And on his brest a bloodie crosse he bore,
> The deare remembrance of his dying Lord,
> For whose sweete sake that glorious badge he wore,
> And dead, as living, ever him adored :
> Upon his shield the like was also scored,
> For soveraine hope, which in his helpe he had,
> Right, faithfull, true he was in deed and word ;
> But of his cheere did seeme too solemn sad ;
> Yet nothing did he dread, but ever was ydrad."

It is true that in as far as the defence of the weak, generosity, truth, and a lofty standard of personal purity constituted chivalry, there was nothing in that institution which was not already in Christianity ; but it was of some consequence in those regardless times to have even a limited

number of virtues canonized and surrounded by the highest sanctions. And the fruits were fair. It was from a true feeling of chivalry that, when his favourite son broke his parole and escaped from the Tower of London, John of France took the place of the runaway hostage and died a prisoner in England. It was from the same feeling that when Edward the Third was about to put to death the citizens of Calais, the angry monarch who had resisted other intercession felt constrained to grant the demand of his good Queen Philippa. "Dame, I wish you had been somewhere else; but I cannot refuse you. I put them at your disposal." It was the same feeling which, on the eve of the battle of Ivry, induced Henry of Navarre to go up to Colonel Schomberg and apologize for some hasty word, "in case I don't survive," and which led the gallant German to stammer forth, "Ah, sire! you kill me with your words; for now the [illegible] is nothing for me but to die in your defence," as next day he did, in rescue of the king, and before his eyes. And the same knightly sentiment it was—not the less noble for being Christian—which on the field of Zutphen, when the flask of water was held to the lips of the dying Sydney, and he noticed the wistful look of the bleeding soldier near him, pushed it away with the words, "Give it to that man, his need is greater than mine."

Such things are no doubt older than mediæval chivalry,—some of them, we think, as old as Moses, and all of them as old as that Divine model from whose inspiring example, through channels sufficiently tortuous and turbid, they originally came. But something is due to the system which in days dark and savage caught up a few of those graces which once encircled the brow of Absolute Goodness, and entwining them together taught rough warriors to contend for the chaplet of knightly renown. And right sorry should we be if in standing up for the absent or feeble, if in forgiving the fallen, if in fulfilling his promise, if in commanding his passions, the soldier of Jesus Christ did not show that piety is the supreme of nobleness, and that the Christian is the flower of chivalry.

For example: Championship is chivalrous. Scenes like what Moses witnessed are of frequent occurrence; but when the bludgeoned Egyptian smites the unarmed Hebrew, when great hulking clowns water their flocks at troughs which feeble women have filled, there is not always a Moses at hand to punish the miscreants and redress the wrong. On such occasions be the Moses yourself: stand up for the weak and the weaponless. Your absent acquaintance is disparaged, or a man of worth who is no acquaintance at all—by your silent displeasure or outspoken defence let it be seen that in you the

absent have a constant advocate. In the public vehicle some solitary traveller, poor sempstress or servant-girl, is annoyed by the rude gaze or ruder remarks of some low-minded passenger, change places with her, or reprove the ruffian outright; and you need not be afraid, these coarse fellows are so cowardly. Or some unfortunate neighbour cannot get his rights, by that most terrible tyrant, English Law, confused, contradictory, uncodified, with all its torture-chambers—Courts of Exchequer, Courts of Queen's Bench, Courts of Chancery: by its tremendous intimidation in the hands of unprincipled rapacity the rights of the widow and the fatherless are withheld:—if with the help of any good angel in a long black robe you could overturn the throne of iniquity and recover the spoils of injustice; or, better still, if you could explode the whole system of legal oppression, Hercules with his hydra, George with his dragon, would be champions less worthy than you; England would thank for ever the great legal reformer who smote its Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

Or say, Generosity. When after the great fight of Crecy the prince bestowed 500 merks a year on Lord Audley, it was deemed a noble deed when he at once divided them among the four valiant friends to whom he felt that his success was owing. And so, few things should be better understood in this

our day than pure and disinterested conduct in regard to money. Like Moses coming away from the treasures of Egypt, show plainly that you have elsewhere a better and enduring substance. Show plainly that if there are occasions on which you do not grudge to give wealth away, there are ways in which you disdain to make it.

Having mentioned as an attribute of Christian nobleness forbearance to the fallen—and it comes from the original code of honour, the statute-book of that Grand-Master who said, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him,"—I shall end with an instance taken from no book of heraldry, but from the humble annals of a Scottish minister. The Spanish Armada created great consternation in Scotland; but one morning James Melville awoke to find one of the magistrates of Anstruther at his bedside with the news that a shipful of Spaniards was in the harbour in great distress, and the captain ashore. "Up I got with diligence, and there presents us a very reverend man, of big stature, grey-haired, and very humble-like, who, after meikle courtesy, bowing close with his face near the ground, and touching my shoe with his hand, began his harangue in the Spanish tongue." Of that the purport was the wreck of the Armada and the straits to which they themselves were driven. "I answered that howbeit neither our friendship (which could not be

great, seeing their king and they were friends to Christ's greatest enemy, the Pope of Rome), nor yet their cause, against our neighbours and special friends of England, could procure any benefit at our hands, nevertheless they should know that we were men, moved by human compassion, and Christians of better religion nor they. For whereas our people resorting amongst them on peaceable and lawful affairs of merchandise, were taken and cast into prison, their goods and gear confiscated, and their bodies committed to the cruel flaming fire for the cause of religion, they should find amongst us nothing but Christian pity and works of mercy." Accordingly the laird of Anstruther received Don Gomez and the other officers into his house, and entertained them generously, whilst the crew and soldiers, to the number of 260, were regaled during their stay with such food as the place could supply. It is pleasant to know, what Melville adds, "This Don Gomez showed great kindness to a ship of our town which he found arrested at Cadiz at his home-coming, rode to court for her, made great praise of Scotland to his king, took the honest men to his house, inquired for the laird of Anstruther, for the minister, and his host, and sent home many commendations."[1]

[1] James Melville's Diary, 260-264.

III.

The Momentous Choice.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."—HEB. xi. 24-27.

WHEN Hercules had grown up he went out into a solitary place to muse over his future course of life. After a while he saw two female figures approaching; the one in white apparel, with a noble aspect, open and innocent; the other painted and bedizened, and looking to see if people looked at her. As they drew nearer, this last ran briskly up, and was the first to accost him:—"Oh, Hercules, I see that you are perplexed about your path in life. If you will make a friend of me, I shall conduct you the smoothest and most charming road. You will not be troubled with business, or battles, or tasks of any kind; but your whole study shall be where to find the best wines and the nicest dishes,

the newest scents and the most fashionable clothes, the merriest companions and the most exciting amusements. And you need take no trouble about the *wherewithal,* for if you will surrender to my guidance there are friends and familiars of mine who will take care to provide the supplies." "And pray, madam," said Hercules, "what may be your name?" "My name," she replied, "is Pleasure, although my enemies have nicknamed me Vice."

Then said the other: "Hercules, I knew your parents; and from what I saw of you in your boyhood I am sure you are capable of noble deeds; but I must not deceive you with delusive promises. As the Higher Powers have arranged the world, you can hope for nothing good or desirable without labour. If you want the gods to be your friends, you must serve them; if you want to be loved by your acquaintances, you must make yourself useful; if you want your field to be fruitful, you must till it; if you want to be honoured by all Greece, you must do it some great service; if you wish to be a mighty warrior, setting free your friends from chains and slavery, you must take lessons from some good soldier; you must learn to bring the body into subjection, and must submit to discipline."

It was a frank statement, but there was in the speaker a truth and winsomeness which at once secured the honest heart of Hercules, and he rose up

to follow Virtue along the rugged path to immortality.[1]

The choice of Hercules was no myth in the case of Moses. He had only to continue as he was, and he had everything that heart could wish. He had only to conform to the wishes of the kind-hearted Thermuthis, and his future was already made. A palace was his home, royal dainties were his daily fare, pages and lackeys were around to anticipate his every wish, and there was nothing to restrain the love of amusement or the appetite for sensual indulgence.

But at whatever period he first learned it, Moses had come to know that he was no Egyptian. Belike he had learned it from his parents early. His parents were believers. It was from their "faith" in God, and in all probability from some special revelation regarding their remarkably beautiful child, that they had ventured to conceal him so long; and after his wonderful preservation and promotion, it is not likely that, either for their own sake or their people's sake, they would hide from him his birth or his hoped-for destiny. At all events, in due time Moses came to know it, and the decision to which he came is one of the most heroic things in history. But, like all the higher feats of heroism, its motive and inspiration was his faith. God had promised to

[1] Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, ii. 1.

Abraham, "In thee and in thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed;" and Jacob had died predicting, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah till that Shiloh come to whom all nations shall rally." And this Moses believed. He believed that the poor down-trampled people in Goshen were greater than their tyrants and taskmasters. He believed that, broiling out there amongst the brick-kilns, were slaves whose descendants would throw into the shade all the pomp and power of Pharaoh. Above all, he believed that the true God was none of those idols on whom Egypt wasted its worship, and to whom it erected fanes so imposing; but he believed that the one living God was that unseen Creator whom his fathers had worshipped, of whom he had never seen any image or symbol, who had built his own temple in the universe, and who to Abraham had foretold, "Thy seed shall be four hundred years a stranger and a servant in a foreign land; and afterward I shall punish their oppressors, and bring out themselves with great substance."[1] And, acting on this belief, he refused to be called the son of the princess. No doubt she thought it perverse, nor could his companions admire his taste. To avow such base connections they thought mean-spirited and abject, and the very thing of which Moses gloried as his nation's destiny had become a

[1] Gen. xv. 13, 14.

subject of derision. It seemed a pleasant fancy—a Messiah emerging from these mud-fields, a sovereign of mankind who should boast for his ancestry hod-men and brick-bakers; and in the mouths of the heartless but humorous Egyptians the hope of Israel had become a taunt and a byword. But Moses believed it, and "the reproach of Christ" was to him greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; and, in circumstances far more trying, he made a choice more noble than the son of Alcmena, for he not only preferred virtue with all its hardships to sin with all its pleasures, but renounced all that this world could offer, for the sake of a people who had nothing earthly to offer in return.

The choice of Moses was an act of faith. It was "through faith that he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;" just as it was "through faith" that his parents hid him. And this is well explained by what afterwards is added: "He looked away to the future recompense;" "he endured,"—he held out or bore up,—"as seeing Him who is invisible." There was an attraction in the pleasures of sin; but Moses looked away from these allurements to pleasures higher and more enduring. There was terror in the monarch's frown, but Moses took refuge from it in the smile of a mightier Potentate. And this was faith. Had he merely closed his eyes on the charms of Egypt,—had he

merely steeled his nerves against the threats of Pharaoh,—it might have been manly or noble-minded; but besides that without faith he was not likely to have done it at all, through faith he could afford to do it cheerfully. God had opened his eyes and shown him in heaven a better and enduring substance, so he could lay down without a sigh a chain of gold or even a kingly crown. God had opened his ear, and through all the din and angry demonstration, like father Abraham before him, a sustaining voice upheld him,—"Fear not, for *I* am thy shield;" and though the idols of On were so awful to their votaries, and though Pharaoh had an army at his beck, the Lord on high was mightier than all, and Moses went through with it serenely, sublimely, "as seeing Him who is invisible."

From time to time the Lord allows to take place like trials of the faith of His people. In the reign of Louis XIV. the Protestants were the flower of France, just as France was then the foremost of nations. Owing to their superior intelligence and morality the Huguenots had got into their own hands a large share in the trade and the largest share in the manufactures of the kingdom. They were prosperous and wealthy and increasing, when a decree came forth proscribing the Protestant religion and prohibiting all Protestant worship. By a double stroke of despotism every Protestant

minister was banished, every Protestant layman was interdicted from leaving the kingdom. But whilst the Calvinistic laity were kept at home, they were ordered to consign their children to the care of Romish teachers, they were forbidden to employ any but Romish servants in their families, and death was denounced on those who should attend any other than Romish worship. For the faith of some these penalties were too awful, and they yielded and conformed. But a glorious army preferred the reproach of Christ, and showed that they were not afraid of the king's commandment. They loved their beautiful France, and they hardly hoped to find another land with an air so elastic and with an inspiration so gladsome and gay: but France was not heaven, and after a few years of the better country the fogs of England and Holland would be forgotten. They loved the home of their fathers, and grudged to surrender to the Papist and stranger the fields they had bought with their earnings and the orchards they had planted for their children. And some of them, like Rapin and Savery, and Lyonnet and Basnage, were scholars and men of science, and they grieved to leave behind them the libraries and learned reunions of Paris. And the attempt was dangerous. If intercepted they were doomed to the galleys; that is, for the rest of their days they were chained two and two on benches in long flat boats,

and obliged to row with long heavy oars, unsheltered from the weather, and allowed no other bed at night than the bench to which they were fastened by day. Yet, looking anxiously at it, they saw no alternative. To return to Popery would be to deny the Lord who bought them, and even if caught and consigned to the galleys, it would be better to "suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." And so by faith they forsook France, not fearing the wrath of the king, and the sentinels whom he had posted along the frontiers. Hid amongst bales of goods on ship-board, or in empty casks with only the bung-hole to breathe through; venturing to sea in open boats without provisions in wintry weather, with nothing to give their famished children but the falling snow; fine ladies disguised as market-women, and trundling barrows along the miry roads; grey-headed nobles driving cattle, or travelling by night and lurking in barns or caverns all day,—three hundred thousand of them earned their recompense of reward, and if they impoverished France they have ennobled Europe, and enriched the records of the faith by their martyr-like migration.

Events like these—the decision of Moses, the flight of the French Huguenots, the death of our own worthies,—God permits from time to time as trials of his people's faith and tokens of His own

power to support and carry through. And they are of great value as tests or touchstones of our own sincerity, and as incentives to our own devotedness. Have we a faith like theirs? From the things present do we look away to the future recompense? And amidst all the witnesses of our conduct, do we remember that great Spectator who is invisible?

The lesson is especially significant to those who are in the outset of their career, and who have not yet given themselves to God. Let us look at it as calmly and yet as carefully as we can.

Perhaps you don't much like the people of God. You say that they are dull and melancholy, censorious and severe, narrow-minded and bigoted, and that you cannot take to them at all. Well, you certainly are not bound to love gloom and moroseness and uncharitable partisanship, and it is to be regretted if the Christians you have met are marred by such infirmities. They would be far nobler characters and much worthier of their name if they were bright and open, expansive and magnanimous. And that is the sort of Christian which the Lord asks *you* to become,—upright and manly, brave and truth-loving, with a mind as highly cultured as you please, but with a pure heart and a fervent. It is not so much with God's people as with God Himself that you have to do, and His claims are paramount. To Him give your heart. He asks it, He

deserves it, and if you have a heart to give, and hold it back from infinite excellence,—if you have a heart to give, and refuse it to your best Benefactor,—there may be blemishes in Christians, but amongst true Christians there is no one with ingratitude so base and rebellion so dark as yours; there is no one saying to the best of Beings, "Depart from me," none turning his back like you on the Friend of sinners.

Hard words and strong, but I fear too true: for if conduct speaks as well as words, is not this the language of your life?—"O God, I do not love Thee. I wish Thou wert not so holy; I wish Thou wouldst not haunt me. I sometimes try to love Thee by hoping that Thou art kind and easy and indulgent to the foibles of poor wretches. But when I turn to the Bible my mind shuts up: I cannot love a God so righteous, strict, and true." Is not this the language of your life?—"O Christ, I cannot thank Thee. That kingdom of heaven which Thou didst open is not one into which I desire to enter. That heaven which Thou didst purchase has no attractions for me, except as the only asylum from hell. If it was to save from sin that Thou didst die, I have no present wish for such salvation."

And this brings out what is possibly the main point after all: "the pleasures of sin." I have no doubt that Christ's great competitor is Sin, and

if it were not for some habit, evil and inveterate, perhaps the most of men would be Christians.

I cannot agree with those who speak as if sin had no pleasures. Surely all experience is against them. Probably the consciousness of many here contradicts them. If there were not something very sweet in the devil's bait, would so many nibble at it with full knowledge that a fatal hook is lurking underneath? if the flowers were not fair and the fruits were not tempting, would so many venture within the precincts where prowls the murderer of souls?

To some intoxication has its pleasures. They like to forget their misery or to feel their powers enhanced by the false and flattering cup; or they like to look at life with the purple tints it wears as seen through the mantling amethyst. Such pleasures has this sin, that they will drink though ruin stares them in the face. They will drink though the clothes are rotting off their backs, and the flesh is wasting from their bones. They will drink though decent friends are dropping off and desolation reigns in their joyless and dismantled dwelling. They will drink although in their sober intervals spectres haunt their brain, and God's own warning, "Drunkards shall have their portion in the lake that burneth," is fearfully countersigned by the fire already kindled in their bosom.

Others cannot resist the pleasures of sense and the gratification of the coarsest appetites. The books they read are bad; the places they frequent are infamous; their very "mind and conscience are defiled," and "having eyes full of adultery they cannot cease from sin." It is a shame to *speak* of the things *they do;* but surely they would not do them if they did not feel some fearful fascination in their swinish paradise.

To some a pleasant sin is gambling. They know it to be wrong, they feel it to be low, they confess that it is foolish; but they still go on. They have burnt their fingers once or twice, but still their fingers itch for the golden pieces which the tempter holds out to them in his red-hot tongs; and rather than not bet or go back to the billiard-room they will risk the workhouse and the prison, the outlaw's hue and cry, the gambler's blood-besprinkled grave.

No indeed, there is no use to deny a fact so clear and manifest. Sin has its pleasures. Some of these pleasures are so great as to act on certain minds like a spell or a sorcery. Like the little bird within spring of the rattlesnake, they look uneasy at sight of their enchanting enemy, and flap their wings, and flutter to and fro, and do everything but the one thing that would save them—everything but fly away. Sin has its pleasures, and

consequently the minister of Christ pleads at a prodigious disadvantage, for he can only appeal and argue from without, whilst sin has already its advocate within.

Yet, brethren, try to look at it dispassionately. We admit that sin has its pleasures; must you not admit that it has also its pains? Is there not sometimes pain at the moment—a musk-rat in the bottle—wormwood in the wine—the miserable mar-all consciousness that you are doing wrong? the consciousness that this Sunday excursion is clouded by God's frown—the consciousness that in these gains of ungodliness you are resisted by a father's prayer? And when the pleasure is over, is there not often a pain in what follows? When the crackling of the thorns has subsided, do you find aught but the ashes—perhaps too the scorpions which the fire has awakened? The debauch is over—not so the headache; the night at the casino is over—but when will be an end to its consequences? the race-week is over, but when will its debts be discharged, and when will you see an end to its debasing or dishonest entanglements? And what of the lucid intervals? When moments of reflection clear and sober come—what do you think of yourself? You who have been living the beast-life, who have thrown the rein on the neck of appetite and allowed it to run away with the man

and the immortal, what can you say for yourself? You who have wilfully put out the eyes of your understanding and doomed the mighty Samson to work so gross and grovelling—what say you for your moral suicide? What say you for having slain and buried the purest tastes and highest powers which God had given you? And you who have been living the demon-life—who as the sceptic or seducer have ruined another's hope or another's virtue—who as the gambler have expâtriated yourself from the domain of Providence and been obliged to give up prayer—what say you for converting into instruments of iniquity those very faculties which might have been used to serve God and bless your brethren?—what say you for all the ruin you have wrought and which you never can restore?

Perhaps this is a lucid interval. So think now what you will think at last. These pleasures of sin "are but for a season." Another world awaits you, and oh how soon its unending realities may enclasp you! It is the prospect of that world which gives such importance and urgency to the present. My hearer, you are to exist for ever! Your Creator has given you the priceless but awful endowment of immortality. Oh do not make that immortality a perpetuity of woe!

"As on a sphere all smooth and round,
End and beginning are not found;
For ever, even thus with thee—
Unending, vast Eternity,
Eternity! Eternity!
How long art thou, Eternity!
O Man, full oft thy thoughts should dwell
Upon the pains of sin and hell,
And on the glories of the pure,
That both beyond all time endure.
Ponder, O Man, Eternity!"

Of that eternity you are soon to be the inhabitant, and whatever you are when you enter it, that you must continue all throughout. And sin has no pleasures there. The season of enjoyment is past; the season of remorse and punishment has come. Even now you are not without the occasional presentiment—for although you may bury your sense of immortality you cannot extinguish it: you may besot and stupify it, but it wakes again. O that it would cry so loud as to scare you from your sins before you hear the waves of the eternal ocean chiming, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is holy, let him be holy still." O that it would rouse you who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, before you hear that strange and startling sentence, irresistible, irrevocable, that inverted gospel which your own impenitence extorts from no other lips than those of a long-rejected Saviour, "Depart from me, ye

cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Oh brethren, look away from the things present, have respect to the recompense of reward. Those prudential prospective faculties which you use so often to secure a temporal good, use them to insure a holy and happy immortality; that self-denial which you often exert, abjuring for days and years together ease and enjoyment, in order to win wealth or fame, exert it here, and in order to insure an eternity of blessedness renounce for the season of this mortal pilgrimage the pleasures of sin.

"The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence," and there is no effort so vehement but it would be worth while to exert it here. In order to break off from the society of a bad companion, towards whom he felt a fatal fascination, we have read how Alfieri the Italian dramatist got his hair cropped, so that he should be unfit to go out of doors, and made his servants bind him in his own arm-chair till he was cured of his infatuation. And such are the struggles of men in earnest. By force like this should you take the kingdom of heaven rather than lose it altogether. By force like this should you rescue from the enemies now swarming over it that pearl of great price, your never-dying soul.

Yet, after all, it is not *force* for which there is occasion here so much as *faith*. Moses opened his

eyes, and illusions fled away. He put his hand in the hand of God, and forth from the impure and idolatrous purlieus of Memphis was led by way of Midian and Sinai and Pisgah to heaven. By faith he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; but in so doing he rose to a higher rank, for at once God called him His son. By faith he renounced a fortune purchased by sinful compliances, and instantly found that he was richer than ever,—rich in peace of conscience and in the friendship of All-sufficiency. By faith he forsook Egypt, and in that very forsaking found life everlasting. By faith he surrendered the pleasures of sin; at the very longest they could have only lasted for fourscore years, and must have run very low before the end of that "season:" for three thousand years he has been enjoying the pleasures which are at God's right hand,—pleasures which neither pall nor perish, for they are pleasures evermore.

So, dear brethren, look away from the things immediately surrounding, and surrender to the influence of those which are not the less urgent because "invisible." By faith you know that you must die, although that final hour of your earthly history is not seen as yet; and when it comes the merriest of companions will be but a sorry comforter. You will want some one who **can** go into God's presence with you and so befriend you there

as to take off the terror which must otherwise attend a guilty creature's interview with his Sovereign and Judge. But by faith you know—if not, learn it on the instant,—that there is a Friend of sinners, God's beloved Son, who will with all zeal and all efficacy perform that gracious office then, if you accept His friendship now. He is invisible, but He is not far away. He is here present; and how it would rejoice His tender generous heart if this very moment you would say, "Lord Jesus, Thou art worthy, and to Thee I give myself, body, soul, and spirit, to be for ever Thine. Lord Jesus, Thou art mighty: keep me from sin and Satan; keep me to Thy heavenly kingdom. Lord Jesus, Thou art merciful: wash away my sins in Thy own most precious blood; take me from the fearful pit and put into my mouth the new song of the pardoned sinner:—

'A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Thy kind arms I fall;
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,
My Saviour and my All.'"

On the night after Hedley Vicars read in his Bible, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," he could hardly sleep for thinking over that most wonderful of all truths which a sinner can discover. But it was enough. His mind was made up. "If this be true for me, henceforth, by the grace of God, I will live as a man should live who has been

washed in the blood of Jesus Christ." He displayed his banner. The Bible, lying open on his table at this passage was thenceforward to tell what a Saviour he had found, and under whose colours he intended to march the rest of his journey. And God gave him grace to hold on, till in the trenches of Sebastopol the bullet pierced his heart, and the good fight was ended. Oh my friends, young and old, who are not yet decided, may God give you grace to do as that gallant soldier did, as did the most illustrious of all the Hebrews! May He so reveal to you the surpassing worth of your never-dying soul, and the peerless claims of the Son of God the Saviour, that there shall henceforth be no more halting betwixt two opinions, but that for you to live henceforward shall be CHRIST—the sole foundation of your hopes, the supreme object of your affection! Oh that the Holy Spirit would in His mercy make you wise and make you willing! Oh that He would make this a time much to be remembered, and this place to you ever sacred and ever dear as the valley of decision!

No; do not say, I will attend to it very soon, but this is not a convenient season. Perhaps it is not convenient; perhaps you have projects in view or engagements in hand which prevent you from instantly commencing a Christian career. If so, it would be better to abandon them instantly; for if

you wait till the devil gives you leave to come to Christ, you will wait too long; if you wait till pride and vanity, till worldly-mindedness and sinful passions, give their vote for goodness and for God, you will wait till repentance comes too late, and wisdom costs too dear. But why delay? Is it anything so dreadful that you are asked to do? Is it such a hardship to give up husks for royal dainties—the prodigal's rags for robes of beauty—the swineherd's hovel for the Father's bosom? You say this season is not for you convenient. But is there no other whose convenience ought to be consulted? Must the teacher wait till it is convenient for the pupil to take his lesson? Must the sovereign be kept waiting till the criminal shall make up his mind about accepting the pardon? Must the physician wait till the patient, who has received an envenomed wound, shall have leisure to take the remedies? Must the Saviour stand here, and follow you hence, and hover round you, offering you that pardon which He purchased with His blood? and is He bound to wait till you are disengaged, or have a fit of sickness, or some scrap of useless time to spare for Him? And must that kind Monitor and Persuader, who has so oft dealt with you, and despite your inveterate earthliness almost persuaded you, must the Holy Spirit wait till you are willing to be made more willing? Ah! I know not how it may be with you, but with

that God whom you have offended, and who now offers to be reconciled, *this* is the time convenient. With that Saviour who this day holds out His arms of invitation, saying to you, O sinner, "Come unto me," this is the time convenient. With that gracious Convincer who this moment makes you anxious in order to make you happy for ever, to-day, this hour, is the time convenient. Oh then harden not your heart! With God this is the day of grace—this is the accepted time—let it be to you also the convenient season, and then it will be the day of salvation!

IV.

The Father of History.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS—CHAP. I.—L.

ONE of the most delightful books which ancient Greece has handed down to us is the History of Herodotus. With its old stories of Persia, Egypt, and Babylon—with its romantic episodes and amusing anecdotes—with its clever sketches of character and its interesting details regarding countries which the writer actually visited, all given off with matchless simplicity and freshness, in a style free, open, and flowing, it forms a repertory of entertainment and instruction of which the reader never wearies, and to which, all its credulity and superstition notwithstanding, we return from time to time with affectionate gratitude. Its nine books, dedicated to the nine Muses, are said to have been publicly read over to the Athenians, who rewarded the recital with a vote of ten talents (£2400); and, Homer excepted, no Greek author has taken such hold of succeeding generations as he whom, with fond con-

sent, they have agreed to call "The Father of History."

There is no risk that we shall pluck a leaf from these ancient laurels if we remark that there is another more strictly entitled to the epithet. For the true Father of History we must go back a thousand years before the days of Herodotus; and the fact that it forms a portion of the sacred canon is no reason why we should close our eyes on the historic value of the first book of the Bible and its many incidental charms.

We have already so far traced the history of Moses. Born in the midst of mournful circumstances, but miraculously preserved, we have seen him brought up amidst wealth and luxury and brilliant expectations; we have seen him initiated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and have no doubt that geometry and the movements of the heavenly bodies, with the jurisprudence and chronology of that wise and ancient people, became familiar to his mind. But although adorned with these "Egyptian jewels," we have seen how his heart continued leal to his own people, and how, disdaining the bribes of ambition, he quitted the tyrant's palace a Hebrew and a patriot. We have seen how the active and athletic frame into which his goodly childhood had grown, prophetic of a green and energetic old age, was animated by the soul of a hero; and in our last lecture

we saw that patriot and hero come out the noblest style of manhood,—a saint renouncing the pleasures of sin,—a believer casting himself on the protection and promises of God. We saw him an exile and an outlaw, escaping to a sublime but lonely region, and finding an asylum in a good man's tent, where, amidst simple pursuits, domestic affections, and the society of those by whom the true God was known and worshipped, Egypt and its enjoyments, if not Egypt and its captives, could easily be forgotten.

Here it was, we have little doubt, that he wrote the Book of Genesis. How much of its information lingered in the memory of the Israelites, how many of its narratives and incidents had, with other patriarchal traditions, come down in the family of Jethro, it is idle to inquire, because impossible to ascertain. Enough for us to know that it is a portion of that canon to which the Saviour pointed when He said, "Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me;" and of which St. Paul declares, "They are all given by inspiration of God." And we may just add, that with what has recently come to light of Egyptian theology and cosmogony, it is the last book which an Egyptian, or one learned in no other "wisdom" than theirs, could have written.

There are two ways in which the Book of Genesis throws light on its author. It helps to show us what manner of man he was, and it shows how far

he was furnished for the work God had given him to do.

True, the book is inspired, but it is all the more expressive of its author on this account. Believing as we do the plenary inspiration of Scripture, we deprecate the theory which confounds a true inspiration with a mere mechanical instrumentation. An organ is an instrument. To the hand of a mighty master it yields effects which it might never otherwise have entered into the heart of man to conceive, but when that hand is withdrawn it falls mute and dead. Before Milton or Handel touched it, it was not thinking of Bethlehem or Messiah, and now that the strain is ended there is no longer any actual sympathy between the engine and the theme which it discoursed so grandly. But a mind, if it be an instrument, is also a great deal more. With its intelligence and will, with its affections and feelings, when God uses as His instrument the mind of man, He does homage to the laws with which He has Himself impressed it, and brings it into unison with His own; and setting aside the exceptional cases of Balaam and Annas, we may safely affirm that when God condescends to give forth His mind through the minds of our fellow-men, the prophecy and the character of the prophet are in keeping. Glorious gospels are not proclaimed by fierce and fiery Hildebrands, and great tribulations are not

predicted by smart and dapper seers, who buy consols with the proceeds; but just as *holy* men speak as they are moved by the *Holy* Spirit, we expect a congruity throughout. We expect that the light-giver will be himself enlightened; that the utterer of great thoughts will be himself a thinker; that the evangelist's own feet will be beautiful on the mountains; that the life of a Jeremiah will be itself a lamentation. In other words, instead of setting aside the penman, or using him as a mere mouthpiece or machine, we expect to find the prophet full of his own oracle; the sacred scribe his own volume impersonate and alive. The men of God we expect to find the truest types at once of manhood and of godliness; God's men, but still men, our fellow-men, men of like passions with ourselves; and none the less because it constitutes a portion of God's own book, do we regard the first volume of the Pentateuch as one of the books of Moses: a book indicative of his belief and his feelings, of his intelligence, of his taste, of his habits of thought and tone of mind.

Try to isolate this book. Imagine that it is once again what Genesis was once before, all the Bible in the world, then try to form from it a little summary of religion, a little system of theology, and you will be surprised to see how clear and ample is the light which, let forth from God, it sheds on man. Of God

it teaches at once the spirituality and unity, revealing Him as the Supreme Creator, the ever-present, ever-watchful Governor. In the instantaneous expulsion from Eden it exhibits the strictness of His threatenings, in His dealings with Abraham and his descendants, the steadfastness of His promises. In Enoch, with his early assumption to congenial climes, it shows God's affection for His children, and the fond delight with which He takes all goodness to its proper home, even as we have the opposite abhorrence of iniquity in that Nemesis which, at the moment of his crime, clutched the first murderer, and, with fiery brain and branded brow, hurried him away from all but his own horrible companionship. That same revulsion from evil we perceive in the deluge which washed over a polluted world, and in the midst of their orgies swept down into the abyss the revellers obscene; and the same lesson we read again in the flames which, like a blot from the landscape, burned out Sodom. Yet God's mercy and patience and long-suffering, how soft and full they shine in the 120 years' reprieve granted to the guilty antediluvians, in those constant concessions to the cities of the plain, which only ceased when Abraham was ashamed to ask. And, so to put it, which of us could desire a God more gracious, more kind and condescending, than He who talked with Adam in the bowers of Paradise, and with whom

Enoch walked in the solitude of the surrounding wickedness? Which of us could desire a pavilion more secure or a portion more divine than opened to Abraham in the words, "Fear not, Abram, for I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward"? Who could desire a protector more assiduous and more provident than the Guardian who stood by Joseph in the dungeon as truly as on the steps of Pharaoh's throne; or who could seek a trustee and administrator more faithful and powerful than that great Covenant-keeper who gathered to their fathers, took to the abode of their godly ancestors, each successive patriarch, and at the same time watched so carefully the fortunes of their surviving and often sinful descendants?

Then for Man. In this little book we have man's original rectitude and innocence; we have the account of his early fall, with its forfeiture of God's friendship; and, both in the old-world fathers and in the races which radiated from around Mount Ararat, we have, in countless developments, the evil and worse-ward tendencies of unaided unsanctified human nature.

But at the same time we have in this little volume the two sublimest and most sustaining truths which bear upon the history of our species; the one distinctly announced, the other more dimly foreshadowed. What is man, and whence comes

he ? is a question which the wisest of antiquity have asked, and which was often most absurdly answered. Prometheus made a statue, then lighted a torch at the chariot of the sun, and man, the fire-kindler, became king of the other creatures. Cadmus killed a dragon, and sowed in the ground its teeth, and they sprang up a crop of warriors ready armed. Deucalion and his wife found themselves in a drowned and desolate world, beginning to dry up; and, directed by an oracle, they flung stones backward over their shoulder, and shortly afterwards from the soft warm mud sprang forth the various nations of mankind. But, taught by the Almighty Maker himself, Moses tells how from earthly elements God formed man's body, and how, from God himself, and His inbreathing, came man's soul. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." But what about that soul? What other soul or spirit did it most resemble? The soul of the surrounding creatures, or that of some pre-existing race of spirits elsewhere? Wonder, O heavens! and, O man, be astonished at thy own prerogative! "God created man in his own image; in the image of God created He him." By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; and by faith we understand that a house eternal awaits

elsewhere the renewed and ransomed spirit: but surely it needs the same faith to credit this astounding declaration. To look round on man as he actually is, to look round on him as he met the eyes of Moses—brutalized, besotted, scant of intellect,—and through the disfiguring filth and wretchedness espy the immortal, the run-away child of the Eternal, it needs great faith; but he who, with Moses, knows that it is true, needs no poet to proclaim the dignity of human nature, and he need not stagger at aught which God deems fit to do for the recovery of a nature originally so exalted, and for the reinstatement of children once so dear, and still so tenderly desired.

"*God made man after His own image.*" Behold the fact surpassing fable! Behold the faithful saying which should make each man a terror and a glory, a grief and a rejoicing to himself! Is it so? Is this understanding of mine an image of God's intelligence?—this imagination of mine an image of God's immensity?—this immortality of mine an image of God's eternity? This soul which I have got, was it made on purpose to love the holy as God loves it?—to shed affection and blessing and goodwill as these pour with sun-like constancy from God's own beneficence?—was it made to commune with the Most High in lowly confidence and ever-nearing intimacy? Then what a work there is for

thee, O Spirit of all grace, to bring this nature, so debauched, debased, to bring it back to its first estate! and to recover tastes pure and holy, aspirations high and heavenly, what a work is there for myself! "GOD MADE MAN AFTER HIS OWN IMAGE." That one sentence at the opening of the Bible accounts for all that follows. It shows how important is the race which was about to become the subject of a great experiment, and the man who believes this sentence—a sentence which to mental science gives new grandeur, and to man himself an awful and august significance—has no right to stagger at any interposition which Divine goodness might prompt or Divine wisdom devise on behalf of a race so illustrious in its origin and so vast in its capabilities, if withal so woful in its self-entailed ruin. "Great is the mystery of godliness,—God manifest in flesh." But if it does not diminish the mystery, it gives the antecedent possibility when we read regarding the race thus distinguished, "God made man after His own image."

Alongside of man's exalted origin thus clearly revealed, Moses knew the good which God had in store for him, although in more obscure presentiment. In this same Genesis is preserved that germ of all subsequent gospels,—the promise spoken in Paradise, and which assured the disconsolate Mother of Mankind that her offspring should crush

the head of the Deceiver. Here is also preserved that great promise to the Father of the selected Family: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." And here too is recorded dying Israel's prediction: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh (the Prince of Peace or Rest-giver[1]) come, and to Him the people shall adhere,"—the nations shall gather. And whatever might be the specific form which the promise assumed to Moses' wistful and forth-going fancy, as he looked on the sin and the misery—as he recalled the groans of the brick-bakers in Egypt and the blows of their taskmasters—as he saw on every side the trail of the serpent and the work of the destroyer,—he exulted in the hope of a great deliverer, who, breaking Israel's yoke and giving rest to the nations, should bruise the head of the serpent and to all families of the earth be a blessing.

Compiled from the Book of Genesis, such we believe to have been in substance the creed of Moses. It was a possession unspeakably more precious than all the wisdom he acquired in Egypt, and in conjunction with his patriotism, his gallantry, and his expansion of mind, it wonderfully fitted him for the work God designed him to do. Even before that special manifestation at the burning

[1] Hengstenberg's *Christology*, i. 46.

bush, the Most High was to him no unknown God, and entering on the tremendous undertaking to which he was called as Israel's Liberator and Lawgiver, it was of infinite value to have his spirit sustained by considerations so exalted and motives so sublime as those which must have been familiar to the mind pervaded by the sayings of that one book.

Of the contents of this most comprehensive book it is hardly possible in a few flying sentences to present an epitome. Commencing with the commencement of our human history; nay, we may say commencing with the commencement of the universe—for it tells that the universe is not eternal: it had a beginning and God is its Creator—commencing with the dawn of human history, it exhibits man at home in his own world, with the production of six creative days all ready around him, the plants and animals so various, so beautiful, and so fitted for man's use. There is rest and there is worship—for it is the Sabbath—the first in a long series. Then come work, observation, intelligence, culture, the muster of the animals named by an acute and friendly naturalist, that tilling and dressing of the ground in which man exercises his delegated faculty as a subordinate creator and improver, making that which is already "good" still better; that social converse which is the still more important culture of himself. Then follows the

first sin,—the first shame,—the first flight from God's presence. Then comes the first death,—a very dismal one,—the death of one who had brought back to earth much of the lost innocence and piety; a death amidst blows and bloodshed; a death by that dear hand which in tottering infancy the younger brother had often clasped as much for love as guidance; a death which leaves the afflicted parents doubly desolate, for their one son is in a martyr's early grave, and their other son is the murderer. Sin worketh death; and we have the development in that old world's depravity, till the Flood comes and clears it all away. The Ark is aground on Ararat, and for a moment there is devotion, there is gratitude. But Noah's altar has scarcely ceased to smoke, above the dripping crags and from the sundering clouds the rainbow flag has scarcely disappeared, when on the soil of the rescued family sin is sprouting faster than blades of grass are springing from the surface of the soft and reeking earth. And by and bye we see the Tower of Babel rising, with its proud effort to lift the name of Nimrod to the stars, and form a capital for all mankind. But lo! by a strange confusion in their speech, we see the centripetal attraction suddenly exchanged for a centrifugal repulsion, and from around the stunted, unfinished tower the vexed and alienated clans are pressing outward, each along his

separate radius,—to meet no more till one great speech shall reunite the fragments of the exploded family. Having sent forth on their several ways the races still so interesting: those sons of Ham, on whom a father's fault has long pressed heavily; those phlegmatic sons of Shem, with whom India and China still are teeming; and those others with the flowing beard and flashing eye, in whom we still recognise the Arab and the Jew; and last of all, those sons of Japheth, by whom the isles of the Gentiles should be peopled—pilgrims of the square forehead, the sturdy step, and iron sinew,—having for the present sent away to harden amidst their northern mists and snows these future tutors and rulers of mankind, till such season as they should reappear and take up their residence in the tents of Shem,—the record narrows in, and leaving the history of the world, the sacred penman restricts himself to the fortunes of the peculiar people. And throughout those nine-and-thirty chapters which it fills, that history is rather a succession of family records than the annals of a nation. Patriarch follows patriarch, and many an incidental personage flits across the scene. But even at the last the clan only musters threescore souls and ten, and it is only in the four centuries which lie betwixt Genesis and Exodus that the Abrahamic clan has grown into the great and numerous Hebrew nation.

To no historian was it ever permitted to recite events so stupendous as rise one after another in the opening chapters of Genesis, nor incidents more striking and touching or more fraught with special Providence than those which fill the remainder. And although we do not forget the protest of Heinrich Heine against Longinus and the critics who have attempted to point out the beauties of the Bible: "Vain words, your talk of its sublimity, its simplicity: vain tests of human judgment. It is God's production,—like a tree, like a flower, like the ocean, like Man himself,—it is the Word of God; that, and no more,"[1]—yet, as we have said, there is a human underside, and we cannot help forming our own inference as to an author's dispositions from the way he performs his work, from the incidents he selects, from the scenes on which he dwells, from the conclusions which he forces his readers to deduce. Tried by that standard no author can be greater or more good. What tenderness flows forth in that tale of peerless pathos, Joseph and his brethren; what sympathy with the high-souled, pelf-spurning Abraham in his restoration of the spoil and in his purchase of Machpelah; what a love of rural quiet and pastoral simplicity in the fond minuteness with which he paints Abraham's interviews at Mamre, Eleazar's confi-

[1] *Edinburgh Review*, vol. civ. 208.

dential embassy, Jacob's flight and adventures at Bethel, at Padan-aram, at the brook Jabbok; what clear-eyed faith, what devout recognition of the Most High everywhere! And although the grandeur of the themes be itself explanation sufficient, has it not in some measure been owing to the Divine artlessness and power of the narrative that Genesis has gathered towards itself so much of the genius of Christendom? And after gazing on the 'Deluge' of Turner or listening to the 'Creation' of Haydn, after reading Vondel's *Lucifer*, or Milton's *Paradise Lost*, *The Death of Abel* by Gesner, *The World before the Flood* by Montgomery, how is it that it all feels so familiar and so fundamentally true, unless it be that the original has been sketched in outlines so firm, with tints so transparent and details so suggestive, that the world could not bear the books which might be written, by expanding the great facts embodied in this Book of the Beginning?

For Moses we claim that he is the true Father of History; and what a delightful study would be the annals of our species, if always written in his spirit, so devout and candid and God-recognising! Even as it is, pens the most flippant have unconsciously recorded the fulfilment of prophecy, and the most hostile witnesses have been betrayed into involuntary recognitions of God's ever-working and all-commanding Providence; whilst in the pages of

Sismondi and Guizot, of Merle and Neander, of the old Thuanus and the recent Müller, the devout student joyfully recognises the outstretched arm of that great Governor among the nations, who is wise in counsel and excellent in working.

Of good history there is already more than any one here present is ever likely to overtake; but it is a literature of that kind for which there will be scope and fitness in the leisure of a coming world. Amongst the spirits made perfect will there not be some who shall still look back with wistful interest to that strange and intricate scene in which they once were actors, and who, with the fuller lights supplied by the archives of the Upper Sanctuary, will love to trace again Earth's finished story? Even now the subject is full of interest, and, amidst all its appeals to our human sympathies, he is blind indeed who is not startled ever and anon by the sundering of the cloud, and the coming forth of a resistless and ever-watchful Sovereignty.

Still, interesting as is the past, I must confess our personal concern lies mainly with the present and the future. In reading these bygone records our indignation is often roused by instances of great wickedness or stupendous folly, and we cannot help feeling chagrined and mortified when we see splendid opportunities vilely thrown away. But each of us is at this moment *making* history; each of us has

the option of securing an everlasting abode in those regions to which Moses and all the best and wisest of past ages are already gone. Surely we don't mean to squander our accepted time and throw away this opportunity, and so furnish angel witnesses with a new occasion for astonishment, and ourselves with the materials of unending and unavailing regret. Indeed, my dear friends, if your taste be in unison with this evening's theme, let me make that very circumstance a motive and an argument for sparing no diligence so as to make salvation sure. In giving you the thirst for knowledge, God has taken you out of the common herd. Won't you suffer Him to take you into a company still more select and favoured, by awaking within you the "hunger after righteousness"? If the two co-exist, ample satisfactions are in store for you; but it will be very sad to carry hence an eager, expansive intellect, but in virtue of a heart godless, sensual, and unsanctified, to find yourself in that outer darkness where a superior understanding will only prove a sorer privation and a severer punishment. There are some historic facts to which you have not sufficiently adverted, and they differ from many which you read in your favourite authors, in as far as you are personally implicated, and are yet to come in contact with the Great Agent in them. The Incarnation of the Son of God, His death at Jerusalem,

and the commission with which He intrusted disciples before ascending into heaven,—these events are not only amongst the best-authenticated incidents in our earthly annals, but to every man who knows them they are full of anxious import. O be entreated to advert to them, and dwell upon them, till they become the hinges of your happier history; dwell upon them till, with its simple key, the gospel opens for you a door in your vale of trouble, and lets you out into a golden future; dwell upon them till, not in knowledge only, but in righteousness and true holiness, your mind is renewed after the image of the second Adam; dwell upon them till Christ's resurrection has bridged a path over your own grave, and His ascension and intercession have taught your thoughts to mount toward heaven.

V.

The Call.

"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back-side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him," etc.—Ex. iii. 1, 2.

The fortunes of the little Hebrew foundling we have so far traced. By a remarkable Providence we have seen the child of slavery transferred from the hovel to the palace, or rather from the jaws of the crocodile to the arms of a princess. We have seen him growing up a scholar, an inquiring spirit, intellectual and well informed,—a master of such wisdom as Egypt could supply; we have seen him coming out a hero and a patriot, even in the court of Pharaoh unable to forget that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews; and at last, from devotion to his own down-trampled brethren, casting away all prospects of earthly promotion, and jeopardizing his life in the quarrel of his country. We have seen him the fugitive and the exile, and last Lecture we devoted to what is believed to have been one of the employments of his seclusion, and, without forgetting

the Divine original of Genesis, we considered his claims and characteristics as the Father of History.

Quiet and happy lives make poor materials for biography. The tourist who journeys from Rotterdam up the Rhine seldom looks at the river, for whatsoever may be the wealth afloat on its bosom, whatsoever the fertility conveyed by its waters, there is nothing striking or arresting in its current; and it is only when vexed into rapids at the Lurlei, or when it comes in a thundering cataract down at Schaffhausen, that eyes which watched the clouds or ranged along the banks are recalled to the forgotten stream. So of the three stages of his history Moses would probably have named as the happiest his forty years in the land of Midian. They were very obscure and inconspicuous. It was a great change from the court-end of Memphis, the fashionable quarter of Egypt's metropolis, to the back of the desert; it was a great change from a palace to the scanty accommodation of a tent, and from commanding an army it was a greater change to herding sheep. But "the mind is its own place," and the greatest minds are the least dependent on outward accommodations. The pleasures of Egypt were far from unalloyed. They were too mainly the joys of sense, and were so mixed up with idolatrous observances as to pollute and poison them all, and make them no better than "pleasures of sin." But with

the meditative leisure he enjoyed amongst the lonely mountains, with the piety which he found in the homestead of the priest of Midian, and with the domestic affection to which he returned when in the cool of the day he brought back his flock to the canvas village, and Zipporah and his boy came forth to meet him, he was thankful for his peaceful seclusion, and felt what another was afterwards to sing, "The Lord is my shepherd; He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness."

There had once been a period when Moses had hoped to deliver Israel. How this hope had arisen —whether, as Josephus says (*Ant.* ii. 9. 3), a Divine premonition of his father had been communicated by Amram to his son, or whether his exalted position had whispered the hope to his patriotism,— sure enough not only had Moses been led to cherish the noble purpose, but (as Stephen relates) "he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them."[1] That hope had been thwarted. It had been thwarted in circumstances as mortifying to self-love as they were calculated to quench his patriotism. "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" and after forsaking the court and casting himself on his own countrymen, they plainly told him that

[1] Acts vii. 25.

they did not want his services. Proscribed by the king and repudiated by his own brethren, nothing remained to him except to flee. And it would seem as if, in the asylum which he found, his ambitious projects had died away. Probably news did not travel very fast from Memphis to Midian, and in the mood of both Egyptians and Israelites it was prudent not to apprise any of his hiding-place. But all unconsciously the preparation was advancing in the school of God's selecting; and of that preparation not the least was the *meekening* process in the mind of God's destined agent and envoy.

John Knox was forty-two before he began to preach. To himself it was a great surprise when he was summoned to the work. Already in writing and in conversational discussion he had served the cause of truth; but when an unexpected appeal was made to him and a solemn charge laid upon him, "the said John, abashed, burst forth in most abundant tears, and withdrew himself to his chamber. His countenance and behaviour from that day till the day that he was compelled to present himself to the public place of preaching, did sufficiently declare the grief and trouble of his heart; for no man saw any sign of mirth of him, neither yet had he pleasure to accompany any man, many days together." Yet it was no faltering in the

faith, nor was it any fear for himself that made him hesitate; for when the next Sunday came and with it the first sermon, the hearers exclaimed, "Others *sned* the branches of the Papistry, but he strikes at the root," and others more ominously hinted, "George Wishart spake never so plainly, and yet he was burnt: even so will he be."[1]

In early life spirits are high and hope is sanguine, and therefore it is fortunate that in early life most persons get committed to their career. But Moses was about to commence an undertaking for which the self-reliance of a sanguine temperament would have been wholly insufficient. Had he been encouraged in his first attempt, had he found his compatriots ready to revolt when he was prepared to be their leader, we can imagine a successful insurrection. The Israelites were very numerous, and a sudden servile rising of half a million, most of them concentred in one region, might have found the effeminate Egyptians off their guard, and before they could rally an exodus might have been effected, and by a sudden dash across the shorter desert a portion of southern Canaan might easily have been wrenched from the unprepared inhabitants; and so in a few days and by a succession of brilliant strokes the bondage of centuries might have ended in a speedy and triumphant return to

[1] *Knox's Works* by Laing, i. 188, 192.

Palestine. In that event, however, the training and purifying processes of the long wilderness would have all been superseded, and instead of entering the Land of Promise a peculiar people, God-guided and God-governed, they would have tumultuated into their new abode a mob of self-emancipated slaves and self-gratulating victors, with the vices of Egypt still uncured, and utterly unfitted to subserve Jehovah's special purpose.

In accordance, therefore, with the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, although much to the mortification of the moment, when in the flush of youthful enthusiasm—for at forty he was young—Moses offered his services, they were ungraciously declined, and the disappointed patriot seems to have abandoned all hope of being Israel's deliverer. But from the instant that he despaired of himself he began to grow fit for God's purpose. He whose way it has ever been to thrust down the mighty from their seats could now answer the question, "By whom shall Israel arise?" for Moses had grown humble and meek. In the long and sequestered years he had learned to know his own deficiencies, and in any work to which God might call him he was prepared to merge himself in the will of the Most High. Instead of rushing on the work in vain-glorious confidence, he would now feel that it was one which God alone could accom-

plish. Instead of starting up the self-constituted agitator and orator, he was now prepared to go before Pharaoh in calm superhuman solemnity as Jehovah's messenger. And instead of maturing his own plans and devising his own expedients, and giving forth his own orders, he was in that state of mind which no longer caters for applause, but, prefacing its oracles with "Thus saith the Lord," ascribes of all prosperous achievement the glory to Him from whom all glories are.

When a youth leaves school or ends his course at college he is apt to feel a certain complacency. He knows three or four languages, and astronomy, and geography, and, in short, more or less of all things knowable. So learned is he that he would not like to be thought ignorant of anything, and would almost blush to be asked a question which he could not answer. But wait for twenty years; and although at the end of that time he has immeasurably extended his attainments, and is now so far a master or monopolist in some department as to receive homage from adepts and pilgrimages from strangers,—with himself far more profound than the sense of proficiency is the sense of imperfection, and whilst he sighs over vast departments on which he can never hope to enter, there is no phrase he uses oftener than the one formerly so much evaded, "I don't know." When a man begins a religious life,

there is apt to be a self-complacent stage in his incipient piety. His conduct is correct. Compared with some older Christians, there is more fervour in his zeal, more freshness in his feelings. In worship, praise and thanksgiving and intercession are the exercises in which his spirit is freely carried forth; he could almost dispense with confession. But as the years move on, he has apparently grown worse; for although others speak of him as so good a man, to take his own account his character is made up of desiderata, his career is all one shortcoming. There was once a time when Moses thought that he was the man to deliver Israel. But now when God actually proposes it, he is startled, almost petrified. "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and bring forth the children of Israel?" Are not you the son of Pharaoh's daughter and the topmost man among your people —the fosterling of royalty—the favourite of fortune —the statesman and the sage? and if not you, who is there else? But all these proud swelling thoughts have long since subsided, and Moses has again in his own eyes dwindled down into the son of the Hebrew thrall and the herdman of Jethro's cattle. And so as regarded superior sanctity, personal prowess, the gift of persuasive oratory—on every attribute of special aptitude for such a work he founded a special difficulty; and the man who earlier in the

day had been so little deterred by any felt deficiency that he would have volunteered on the service, now that he is summoned to assume it he has only one plea after another: "They will ask me, What is God's name? They will not believe me. They will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee. And then, O my Lord, I am not eloquent."

From a subsequent expression of his father-in-law (iv. 18), it would seem as if Moses had little idea how affairs were proceeding in Egypt; but a new crisis had arisen. The old king was dead. In all likelihood this was an event to which his hapless vassals had looked forward with hope; for however profligate and unprincipled a young prince may be, he is seldom so cruel as a surly old tyrant. But in this instance a Claudius was followed by a Nero, and when the wretched bondmen found that the new sovereign meant to carry through the harsh measures of his father, their spirits failed. They could no longer cheat their misery with the hope of change. They could no longer cheer one another with bulletins of the old king's failing strength and advancing infirmities. The new king was young and strong, and in the course of nature would see half of them into their graves; and with his iron heart and savage humour it was a fearful prospect for themselves and their children. But having no heir-apparent now to look to, they looked

—where few of them, it is to be feared, had looked before—they looked to the Lord; and as the cry of their agony pierced the heavens, "God heard their groaning." He remembered His covenant with Abraham, and slight as was the personal claim of the suppliants, He recalled His promise to their believing fathers and resolved to deliver them. But Israel saw no sign. There was no diminution of their tasks, no mollifying on the part of their inexorable masters, no hint of release or holiday: but the sky burnt hot and the rod fell hard as ever. Nay, there was not even an angelic messenger, nor a prophet sent from among their brethren to bid them bear up and hold on. Yet it was all in motion: the Lord had arisen out of His place and deliverance was at hand; for whilst they were weeping and slaving and pouring forth the petitions of despair in Egypt, the bush was already burning in Horeb and the appointed deliverer was receiving his instructions and commission, and hastening on the path of rescue.

Wherever there is prayer God is present; nay, wherever there is prayer on the part of man, there is an immediate answer on the part of God, although that answer is not always instantly perceptible. The cry may go up from Egypt and the answer may come down at the back of the desert. Nay, God Himself may have come down to the

very spot, and may be surveying the sorrow and sustaining the sufferer with a secret but powerful support; and yet, as there is no voice to break the silence, no visible glory to irradiate the gloom, the groaning may still go on and for a time the suppliant may continue to exclaim, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

What makes your misery? Perhaps you suffer through your fellow-men, through man's unfairness or man's oppression. You make bricks for the Egyptians. You serve an unkind or thankless master. You are unequally yoked with a companion morose and savage. If so, without omitting any reasonable measure for redress, your true refuge is in prayer. And hitherto all your efforts at extrication may have been allowed to fail just on very purpose to shut you up to this, the true and God-glorifying resource. So, without losing longer time, cry you to God, and He will hear your groaning, and will come down and deliver you. By softening some stern nature, by opening some stubborn door, by raising up and sending to the rescue some forgotten or unexpected Moses, He will show that your extremity is His opportunity; that there are no circumstances which Omnipotence cannot conquer; no jarring elements or conflicting interests which Infinite Wisdom cannot reconcile.

What makes your misery? You are perhaps in

slavery. You are serving divers lusts and passions. The Hebrew is in bondage to the Egyptian. The higher, finer nature is in subjection to the coarser and the worse. You know it, and you sometimes feel it; and as you look on the ignominious fetters, and shake the chains which gall you, you exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" And you are beginning to see that you cannot deliver yourself. You have tried both force and flight, you have knocked down your tyrant and tormentor, and you have also run away. But here you are again, the slave of appetite, the victim of strong drink, the gambler, the libertine, throwing away your substance in the devil's service, and into the bricks that are to build your own prison kneading up your health, your peace of mind, your reputation. Oh it is a bitter, bitter bondage! the immortal in thraldom to the brute; the foul fiend leading to and fro, with a rope around his neck, one who might have been the heir of heaven! But if you really loathe it, and cry to God by reason of the bondage, He will come down and set you free. His Holy Spirit entering will fill you with a joy and happiness which will leave no lack and find no need for the pleasures of sin; and, inspiring you with new and noble tastes, He will fortify you so as to resist and vanquish the temptations which will still be sure to come, until a better nature gets gradually built

up within, a nature on which gross allurements exert no more attraction than the garbage which brings the raven to your feet has power to lure the turtle from the bough ; than the husks which the swine do eat have power to bend an angel from his flight. This is a kind which goes out by prayer and fasting. So cry to God. For the glory of His holy name, and for the sake of His interceding Son, beg that He would break that chain with which you have so long been bound, and the links of which your own hands have forged in days of delirious folly ; beg that He would loose you from your bond this very Sabbath-day.

What makes your misery ? Perhaps you are in bondage to a broken and threatening law. A law fulfilled is friendly, and such is the law to which the believer does homage ; a law fulfilled by his Representative, and therefore coming to himself, not to curse and condemn, but to counsel and control, to regulate and guide ; a law that is friendly and propitious for the sake of the law-magnifying Surety, the law-fulfilling Saviour. But perhaps the only law you know is the law which you have broken, and which frowns and looks severe, and says evermore,—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Or, to put it more plainly, you want to reach the promised land of peace and reconciliation, but you have in the meanwhile got into a house of bondage. You

have fallen into the hands of a taskmaster, whom we shall call the Commandment, and you say to yourself, "If I could only please this rigid overseer for a while, he would allow me to quit Egypt at last, and I should go on my way rejoicing. But he is so strict and stern. I have no sooner done one thing than he calls me to account for another. I said my prayers this morning as seriously as possible, and was rather pleased with myself because I read my chapter with some pleasure, when on a sudden provocation I lost my temper, and all my happiness took flight. A few days ago I was beginning to hope the best, for I was conscious of so much obligingness and charity and general good-will; when the spell was broken, and my love to the brethren was sensibly impaired by that primary and impracticable requirement, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul.' To confess the truth, in the way that he haunts and harasses me I feel as if my Lord's commandment did me more harm than good. He exacts bricks without providing straw; and when I begin to brighten up and ask if I am not doing well, he flourishes in my face a long list of faults and errors, and positively, by his severe and peremptory tone, he is like to put me out of love with goodness, and drive me to despair." Such at least was the experience of an earnest, anxious man, who has left

his memoirs in the 7th to the Romans, and who tells us, "Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all sorts of bad desires; and the commandment, which was originally ordained as the way to life, I found the means of death." And so will it ever be as long as you continue in the house of bondage, resting your hope on your own prospective holiness; resting your hope on propitiating that law which has no power to pardon, only the power to command and threaten and condemn. But from this legal bondage, this thraldom to a threatening, frowning law, the Lord Jesus offers to deliver you; and this by doing no disparagement to the law itself, which He has magnified and made honourable, and all whose righteous requirements He fondly and loyally fulfilled. If to this greater than Moses you listen, "the law of the life-giving Spirit in Him will make you free from the law of sin and death."[1] Crucified for your offences, and raised again for your justification, you will find expiation for the past in His sacrifice, and merit for the present in His spotless obedience. Made free by the Son, you shall be free indeed, and "walking" not in laxity, but "at liberty," the taskmaster-precept will be transformed into a commandment holy, just, and good, and the mercenary obedience of the slave into the devotion of the affectionate disciple.

[1] Rom. viii. 2.

I shall enter no further on the narrative at present. There was a famous column in the Forum at Rome, and all the roads of the empire led to it, and their miles were measured from it. The Milliarium of the Bible—the centre of its system—is the Cross. All its paths lead thither. To-night we started from the back of the desert—we began our walk among the bleak ravines of Sinai; and now, inevitably and by simply going on, we find ourselves in sight of Calvary. And we won't turn back. Let us go away looking at Him who took upon Himself the form of a servant in order to deliver us from a double slavery—from bondage to sin, and bondage to a cursing, because broken, law. My beloved hearers, are you sure of it? Has Christ given you this twofold liberty—deliverance from the bondage of corruption; deliverance from the penalty of a violated covenant, a broken commandment? Or, taking this last as the first, Have you found that "the wages of sin is death; but that the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord"? Have you learned with Luther, "Like as the earth engendereth not rain, nor by her own strength and travail is able to procure it, but receives it from above, the mere gift of God; so that other gift of God, eternal life through a Mediator, is given us without our works or deservings? Look then, as much as the earth is able

to do in procuring the shower that makes it fresh and fruitful,—so much can our strength and works achieve in winning that heavenly boon of God's eternal righteousness. It is God's unspeakable gift, and is ours by His mere imputation."

And has that same Divine Emancipator who proclaims liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, has He rescued you from the bond of iniquity, from besetting sins, from the despotism of imperious lusts and passions? If you fear *not yet*, let your cry go up to Him *now*. There is no need that you should die in the dungeon; no need that you should perish with Satan's fetters on your limbs, with a sinful habit entwined and twisted round your soul. Cry to God. In rage and revenge against the accursed thing, cry to God to remember His covenant with His own beloved Son, and look down in pity on your struggle with this crucifier of Christ, this vampire which has fastened on you, and is draining the life's blood of your immortal soul. He is very gracious. Most tender are His mercies, most prompt and present is His aid. He will surely see your affliction, and will hear your cry by reason of this taskmaster. He knows your sorrows, and will come down to deliver you; and in due time will bring you to a good land and a large, even a better than that land which flowed with milk and honey.

VI.

The Burning Bush.

"And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed."—Ex. III. 2.

For His various pupils that great Teacher, the Holy Spirit, has different methods of training, and their education is carried on in widely different seminaries. In the case, however, of those who are destined to head mighty moral revolutions, we find that a period of seclusion and abstraction has been the almost uniform preparation. It was from a prolonged retreat beside the brook Cherith, and afterwards in a cavern of this very Horeb, that Elijah issued forth on the two great incidents of his grand career; and it was from a similar but longer sojourn in the hill-country of Judea, that, in the spirit and power of Elijah, Messiah's harbinger burst forth on an astonished people. Luther's Horeb was the period he spent in the Augustinian convent; Knox's Horeb was his seventeen months in the French galley; and there are men now living

who are exerting a large influence on their brethren, whose own spirit was first wound up to the right intensity during a season of repose and solitude, and who came forth from their chosen or enforced retreat with a baptism on them which still remaineth.

A coated phial will hold a certain charge of electricity; but if there are a number of minute conductors in contact with it, they will draw off the force as fast as it flows in, and reduce to nothing what might otherwise have been a flash of mimic lightning. A tree that grows in a forest, and surrounded by a million more—it may be straight and tall, and there may be no bend or flaw in its smooth and taper bole; but its roots are shallow, and should some chance bereave it of its comrades—should it be left alone—the first blast will lay its leafy honours in the dust; for its growth was entirely gregarious; its safety lay in its associates; and now that this shield is gone, having no depth of earth, the moment that the long fingers of the hurricane are twisted in its locks, it goes over with a crash, and the birds no longer build in its branches. So with earnest feeling in a bustling place: it gets no leisure to accumulate. The seriousness of the Sabbath is stolen by the week; nay, it is spirited away by the first beams of the following day. A jocular companion, an urgent engagement, an ab-

sorbing care, a multitude of matters, some idle and some innocent—like so many furtive conductors, like the very vapour in the atmosphere, are quietly robbing you of the elevation or energy which you felt at night; and before the good purpose comes forth in any definite or decisive act, the power has vanished and you are weak as other men. And so with the piety which is produced and fostered merely by good companionship: as long as you are under the roof of pious parents, as long as you enjoy the fellowship of earnest and fervent friends, you may hold on; but when cast on the wide world, or brought into circumstances of strong temptation, if you are not kept close to God by God himself; if you are not so rooted and grounded in the truth as to render your piety decided and independent of human support, it will be too likely to fall when the weather breaks and the tempests blow.

By choosing the better part, Moses was so far ready for any work that God designed; and in his palace-life he had been unconsciously receiving a portion of his training. He had got some insight to statesmanship and military affairs; he had acquired the etiquette of the Egyptian court, and had learned to be at home in the presence of princes. But these, like "the wisdom of the Egyptians," were mere accomplishments, and for the great but unguessed

undertaking before him Moses needed a profound and peculiar discipline. He needed to grow in acquaintance with that God with whom he was hereafter to commune face to face, and whose messenger and spokesman he was to be in a manner so special and pre-eminent. He needed to be lifted completely and conclusively above those mixed or meaner motives by which well-intentioned men are so often in large measure actuated. He needed to be raised nearer to heaven than earth; and, we may add, he needed to have his entire spirit so habituated to lofty thoughts, so accustomed and inured to live at a high level, that in after days,

> "As some tall rock amidst the waves
> The fury of the tempest braves,"

so his spirit should be able to surmount the molestations and the murmurs, the opposition and the obloquy, which for the next forty years, like a troubled sea, should chafe and churn around him.

For such purpose no retirement could have been found more suitable than the desert of Horeb, that "great and terrible wilderness," which a friend thus describes:—"It was a vision of more utter barrenness and desolation than we had ever seen or fancied; no soft feature in the landscape to mitigate the unbroken horror. No green spot, no tree, no flower, no rill, no lake, but dark brown ridges, red peaks like pyramids of solid fire; no

rounded hillocks, or soft mountain curves such as one sees in the ruggedest of home scenes, but monstrous and misshapen cliffs, rising tier above tier, and surmounted here and there by some spire-like summit, serrated for miles into ragged grandeur, and grooved from head to foot by the winter torrents that had swept down like bursting water-spouts, tearing their naked loins, and cutting into the very veins and sinews of the fiery rock."[1] Amidst this labyrinth of bald and blasted mountains, Moses dwelt for forty years; and although it is vain to surmise what were all the thoughts and musings of this protracted interval, we are inclined to think that a glimpse is given in that Ninetieth Psalm, entitled, "A prayer of Moses, the man of God,"—and which acquires new significance when we think of the hermit lifting up his eyes to these lonely silent pinnacles, and thinking, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." And then, when his thoughts reverted to the wretched scenes in Egypt, "Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their chil-

[1] Bonar's *Desert of Sinai*, p. 236.

dren. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

At last came the eventful day, and yet a day ushered in by no special sign nor devoted to any unusual solemnity. Moses had led out his flock as far as Sinai, where in some of the ravines could be found a fragrant pasture for the goats and the sheep, and where there was a good store of water. It was a sword of fire which guarded the gates of Eden; it was in a chariot of fire that Elijah ascended to heaven; it was a pillar of fire which guided the pilgrims in their desert journey, and which afterwards settled down between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies; it was with tongues of fire that the Holy Spirit symbolized His presence on the day of Pentecost; and it was with an effulgence beyond the noon that the fury-breathing persecutor was dashed down on the way to Damascus; so that the element which we deem the purest and most penetrating, Jehovah seems to have employed throughout as His especial badge and cognisance, the opening of His eye, the flash of His finger. But of this Moses was not thinking when a great sight arrested his eye. A bush, no palm nor olive, but a tamarisk or a thorny acacia, shone out with a brilliant flame. It did not crackle nor burn down, and Moses was

hastening to the spot, when his foot was arrested by a voice divine,—a voice which soon brought him to the dust, hiding his face and fearing to look upon God. In the wonderful interview which followed, the Lord announced His name and the purpose for which He had now appeared to His servant, and with marvellous condescension meeting all the scruples of a meek and self-disparaging recluse, He sent him home the most highly favoured and the most heavily burdened amongst the sons of men; the most highly favoured, inasmuch as he was the first to whom, after the silence of ages, Jehovah had spoken; the most heavily burdened, inasmuch as he felt crushed and overwhelmed with the commission which he dared not lay down, and which he trembled to discharge.

It is worthy of notice that Jehovah did not announce Himself as the God of Levi, the God of Kohath, the God of Amram, Moses' immediate progenitors; but He goes back hundreds of years, and says, "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," to show at once that it was an everlasting covenant, and that although it had not "grown" of late, it was neither dead nor dormant. All the parties between whom it had been originally ratified still were extant: God lived, and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob were living also. Thus Christ Himself explained the words. "Have you any doubt as to the soul's

immortality? Do you not remember how at the bush God spoke of the patriarchs as friends of His, that is, as friends still living? For He is not the God of the dead. The great I AM does not identify Himself with that which has gone into annihilation and ceased to be; so that if at the bush He proclaimed Himself Abraham's God, Abraham must still retain his identity and consciousness, and the time must be coming when he shall resume his body also,—that body by which alone his personality can be completed, and his identity manifested to those who (like Elijah and the saints surviving to the Advent and then translated) are not pure spirits, but clothed in corporeity."

This proof of immortality, as exhibited by the great Teacher, is sufficient; but we scarcely suppose that He gave this proof because the strongest or most telling. "In doubting the resurrection, in questioning the soul's immortality, ye do err from not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God. So pervaded with this doctrine is all Revelation, that it was implied in that fundamental revelation made to Moses, that announcement of God's name which commenced the theocratic history, and even the burning bush blazed with immortality." But instead of bearing hard on those whose cursory or cabalistic eyes so often scanned the words and missed the revelation, let us be

thankful for announcements more articulate, for information more explicit, and for proofs so palpable that faith needs no longer tremble nor ask another sign.

And yet, with life and immortality brought to light, how many close their eyes and miss the comfort! A few days ago we read new biographies of two of the greatest bards of modern Britain; one the most ethereal and idealistic of our poets, the other such a master of the lyre as hardly Gray or Dryden has surpassed. When Shelley was by a sudden squall buried in the Gulf of Genoa, William Godwin wrote to the young and distracted widow, his own daughter, "My poor girl! What do you mean to do with yourself? You surely do not mean to stay in Italy? . . . Above all, keep up your courage. You have many duties to perform; you must now be the father as well as the mother, and I trust you have energy of character enough to enable you to perform your duties honourably and well."[1] Is not this exquisite sympathy from a father to his favourite child, "My poor girl, what do you mean to do with yourself?" Is not this strong consolation from the philosopher who could dispense with Christianity: "Keep up your courage. I trust to your energy!" Again, when Campbell lost his wife (and I fear he had lost any practical faith in

[1] *Memorials of Shelley*, p. 206. Lond. 1859.

Christianity beforehand) his reflection was, "These are strange dispensations, and to what demonstrated end?" but added, "There must be a God, that is evident: there must be an all-powerful, inscrutable God."[1] With deaths so dreary, or rather with survivors so desolate in their sorrow, contrast the hope full of immortality. "Surely," writes the great scholar Bengel after the death of his child, "Surely, when the door of paradise is opened to let in any of our departed friends, delicious breezes blow through it upon us from that abode of blessedness." "As I reclined my head upon my dying child's little couch, I thought I could gladly die with it that moment." And when dying himself, said the successful physician Dr. Gordon, "I have found in Christ a happiness I did not think existed on this side the grave. People have said that death is *frightful.* I look on it with pleasure. I see no monsters around me. Death? I see no death at my bed-side. It is that benign Saviour waiting to take me. This is not the testimony of one who has nothing to live for. I am in the prime of life, with comforts and friends around me; but the prospect of heaven is more than all."[2]

You are immortal, my brethren. If you have found the Saviour, you have experienced a first

[1] Redding's *Reminiscences of Campbell*, vol. ii. p. 131.
[2] *Dr. Gordon*, by Newman Hall, p. 171.

resurrection. The heart which was dead before has come alive again, and you have got new feelings towards God and holiness. You trust in Jesus. You believe that He has gone to His Father's house, and you will believe that He will keep His promise, and that where He is you shall be taken at last, to dwell with Him for ever. But to keep that hope alive, you must keep close to Him who gave it. "A darkening universe" you may defy

> "To quench your immortality
> Or shake your trust in God."

But that which a darkening universe cannot do may be effectually done by a sinful indulgence or a departing Saviour . for the wages of sin is death, and there is death in leaving the Fountain of Life. Oh, it is a chilly clime, that land of estrangement from God,—and under the hazy, frosty cloud which a guilty conscience brings over the scene, confidence Godward and the hope of a glorious hereafter wither away, and even the strength for discharging duty and the elasticity for bearing trial. So, dear friends, as you would desire never to penetrate the fearful mysteries of the second death, escape from the darkness and horrors of the first. Be sure that you have really emerged from the grave of ungodliness,—the death of trespasses and sins. Be sure that, like a tombstone on your soul, there is no bad besetment, no sinful habit holding down your spirit.

And in loving obedience and affectionate communion, keep near that Conqueror of death, who to faithful discipleship says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." And in daily devotion, in the sanctified Sabbath and the frequented sanctuary, keep as near as you can to heaven's gate,—in those connections and employments where He who is "the God not of the dead but of the living" will be apt to meet you, and where you may be cheered by a glimpse of that world in which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob now dwell with God.

There is something wonderfully sublime and spirit-filling in that name by which the Most High now announced Himself to Moses, and by which, in its form of JEHOVAH, He is designated throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, "I AM THAT I AM," the Self-existent, the Immutable, the Eternal, the one living God, to the exclusion of the lords many which Egypt and the other idolaters adored. But self-sufficing as His own perfections are, great are His compassions, most gracious and forthgoing His propensities. The plenitude of His own joy occasions no indifference to the cry of the Hebrew bondmen, the absoluteness of His perfections is itself a necessity for fulfilling the promise to the patriarchs. And this is the believer's privilege. In the Divine nature there is nothing so august or glorious but it may become to him a theme of pleasing contemplation;

for that blessed relation to the Most High which through the Mediator he has resumed, invests each perfection with light and endearment. In itself, "I AM THAT I AM" is a name high and lifted up. Its Divine independence seems to shut the creatures outside; it seems to fling "dust and ashes" to an infinite distance. But when we find that, through the grace of this glorious God, sinners may be saved—when we find that frail fellow-mortals may be taken up into God's eternity—when we find that the life of Abraham is now locked up within the life of God, whilst Abraham, the friend of God, retains his personality and his place in God's affection, the name grows full of strength and comfort. We venture to hope that we may be saved even as they, and that we too may find, within that unchanging name, our impregnable and immortal dwelling-place; and so we sing, at once adoring and confiding—

"The God of Abram praise!
Who reigns enthroned above;
Ancient of everlasting days,
And God of love!
Jehovah! great I AM!
By earth and heaven confessed,
I bow and bless the sacred Name,
For ever blessed!

The God of Abram praise!
Whose all-sufficient grace
Shall guide me all my happy days
In all His ways:

He calls a worm His friend!
He calls Himself my God!
And He shall save me to the end
Through Jesus' blood."

That burning bush laid a lasting hold on the memory and imagination of Moses. When his commission was ended, when about to lay down his miraculous rod, and recalling how not one of the good things which God had spoken had failed, and how all the difficulties which his own timidity had conjured up had disappeared, he reverted to this memorable scene, and, in blessing all the tribes, the best blessing he could wish for Joseph was "the goodwill of Him *that dwelt in the bush*."[1] Apart from all its adjuncts the sight was striking; in connection with the voice of Jehovah, in connection with the affliction in Egypt and the deliverance which from that instant dated, it was a sight never to be forgotten. It was a sight profoundly significant. As we have already hinted, the glory of God was emblemed by the effulgence which outshone the day; but it was not a mere effulgence. "The bush burned;" it did not simply gleam with a mere phosphorescence or lambent light, but it "burned *with fire*;" and it was with Moses the amazement how so fierce a flame could involve the branches and yet leave them fresh and green. Assuredly a sign, it was a symbol also, not merely a

[1] Deut. xxxiii. 16.

prodigy but a lesson to the eye, a symbol interpreted, when from the burning bush Jehovah said, "I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters." And doubtless the Christian Fathers were right in understanding the lowly bush preserved amidst the fire as an emblem not only of Israel in Egypt, but of the Church of God in a persecuting world; and our Church of Scotland fathers have not only sanctioned the interpretation by adopting the emblem, but their records have supplied new illustrations to their own chosen motto, "Nec tamen consumebatur."

How signally the marvel has been repeated in the Babylonish captivity as well as in the Egyptian bondage, in the Christian Church passing through its ten persecutions in the days of imperial Rome, in the Albigenses, in the Lollards of England, in the Huguenots of France, in the Covenanters of Scotland, we need not linger to repeat. There is one inference of practical import with which we are content to conclude.

The individual believer, like the collective company, may be compared to this bush. Like the lowly shrub in Horeb, you feel small compared with the trees of the wood. Your abode is obscure, your attainments humble. You are a root out of a dry ground, and growing where there are few advantages.

And, to make you more anxious, the fire has kindled upon you. You are in straits, in grievous perplexity and trouble. You are in pain yourself, or in deep distress on account of others, in the furnace of affliction, as we say. Or you are assaulted by fiery darts of Satan, fierce temptations, infidel suggestions, allurements to some great wickedness, till, in the red-hot rain, you feel as if you must be utterly consumed. But call on God, and He will come to your rescue. The bush may be in the fire, but if God be in the bush it runs no risk; the flame that laps it round may consume the cankerworms and caterpillars that preyed upon its verdure, but they will not scorch the tiniest sprig nor consume the most tender blossom. There is no affliction so severe but under it God can support, and out of it can carry more than a conqueror. There is no furnace so hot as to consume a hair of your head if the Son of God be with you there. And although all other temples should yield to the torch of the destroyer, like the famed fabric at Ephesus, and the still more famous shrine at Jerusalem, whether it be the frail body of an afflicted believer or the twigs and tendrils of a bush in the desert, which forms the place of God's special indwelling, no fire of earth or hell can hurt a living shrine of the Godhead, far less consume a temple of the Holy Ghost.

VII.

Moses and Messiah.

"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."—DEUT. XVIII. 18.

"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you."—ACTS III. 22.

ANY one who has a wide acquaintance with the story of mankind must have fallen in with many individuals and many incidents which, to a remarkable extent, are the repetition of one another. You are reading the battle of Morgarten. where a handful of Swiss drove back from their valleys the vast array of Austria, and you are irresistibly reminded of Marathon and the little Athenian company which there hurled into the dust the pride of Persia. You read the disastrous march of Darius into the bleak and hungry wilds of Scythia, and you see as in a glass Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. At Salamis you are startled with strange foreshadowings of the Spanish Armada and its destruction on the coasts of Britain; and even at Lucknow you will find few

incidents absolutely new, if already familiar with the defence and relief of Malta and of Leyden. And as with incidents so with individuals. Miltiades and Aristides, the saviours of Greece, are one day all but deified, another day the one is banished, and the other dies impoverished and disgraced. With such precedents, with such knowledge of the impulsiveness and ingratitude of a people, you do not wonder to find the brothers De Witt, after all their services to the republic, torn to pieces by the mob of Amsterdam. Caligula, savage, capricious, and fantastic in his cruelties, keeps the world in tremor, till in self-defence his parasites and favourites are obliged to join together and destroy the bloodthirsty madman. Seventeen centuries later the same words would describe the career and fate of another emperor, Paul of Russia.[1] All this is natural. If there be certain rules which guide the course of Providence, and certain laws which govern human nature, such self-repetitions must abound in the annals of our species. Selfishness and passion, if unrestrained—and there is nothing to restrain a despot—will develop into a fierce and headlong brutality, till even flatterers find themselves endangered, and in self-defence knock on the head the infuriate monster; hence Caligula, hence Paul of Russia, hence the history of Oriental despotisms.

[1] See *Historical Parallels.*—Lib. Ent. Knowledge.

A people so fond of liberty as not to care for life without it, will seldom be allowed to lose it; hence Marathon, hence Morgarten and Sempach, hence Bannockburn. And hence the philosophy of history. Hence it is that a thoughtful man, acquainted with human nature in its springs of action and its actual doings, will often predict, with surprising accuracy, the history of a popular favourite, the career of a commonwealth, the effects of an important law, the outgoings of a revolution. Give again similar men and similar circumstances, and you will have again similar results.

To these parallelisms we have adverted from time to time in our sketch of Moses, and as we proceed we shall likely notice others. But we are now called to mark an identity betwixt Moses and another, which cannot be accounted for as a mere casual coincidence, nor even as one of those historical parallelisms which are occasioned by similarity of disposition and circumstances. In the hand of God, Moses was himself a prophecy of a more illustrious Successor, and through his deeds and services the minds of the peculiar people were taught ideas which found their eventual realization in that great Prophet like unto Moses whom the Lord at last raised up from amongst His brethren.

When we say this we have not in view those outward or incidental resemblances with which

every one is struck, and which certainly did not happen without the Divine intention and control. For example, Moses was born of parents in obscure and humble station, peasants, exiles, slaves; and Christ, born of a poor virgin, was called the carpenter's son; whilst the ark of bulrushes finds its equivalent in the manger at Bethlehem. Moses in his infancy had well-nigh fallen a victim to the wrath of Pharaoh; Jesus was only snatched by a hand Divine from the cruelty of Herod. The 'proper' child, the son of Amram, beautiful exceedingly, is suggestive of that fairest of all men whom God anointed with the oil of gladness above all His fellows. And "the man Moses, exceeding meek," makes us think of Him who says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, for I am meek and lowly."

But the identity to which we allude is deeper, and it will come out, I hope, as we proceed.

1. Moses was a great Deliverer. The Israelites were in despair. They laboured and found no rest. Their tyrants died, but the tyranny did not abate. The years went on, but their sorrows did not lessen; and amidst their growing burdens and deepening anguish, it was vainly that they looked around for a protector or champion, for he was never like to come. Cowed and heart-broken, their cry, their "groaning" went up to God, and from God direct a deliverer dropped into their midst.

And the world was all one Egypt when Christ came. Men were very miserable. The great Roman bully had knocked down all his neighbours, and left no independent nation within sight of his Seven Hills. The submissive fed their masters, the resistful only supplied victims by the thousand for the gladiatorial games. And worse than prætors and proconsuls, men were serving divers lusts and passions,—the slaves of an unseen but ubiquitous Apollyon. The old Pagan faiths were worn out, and such poor virtues as heathenism for a time retained had yielded to unheard-of crimes, till the whole creation groaned,—till, mutually embittered and self-disgusted, all mankind had yielded to the bondage of corruption. It was then that Christ came. It was then that, hearing the cry, confused and anguish-stricken, from a world which had lost all means of self-emancipation or amendment, God remembered His covenant and came down to deliver. It was then that the Son of God was manifest.

2. Moses was a Prophet. Not that he uttered many predictions—for to foretell the future is a very secondary and subordinate function of the seer; and the man of God who tells me what God is and who supplies me with motives to become what God desires, does me a far greater service than if he had projected ever so minute a map of the future. Of

predictions strictly so called our text is almost the only example which occurs in the long career of Moses; and yet, among the mere sons of men, he stands forth unequalled for the contribution which he has been the means of making to our knowledge of God and of human duty. The entire Bible is built on Genesis. The whole subsequent revelations assume the unity of the Supreme Creator there revealed, and they assume the minute and careful vigilance of the great Governor,—the care taken of one poor lad from the pit in Dothan to the palace-gates of On by that same God who said "Let there be light," and who launched the planets on their paths,—that ability of attending to every affair, large or little, which infinite power gives to infinite goodness, and which we call particular or special Providence, the Providence of Omnipotence. And to this fundamental lesson of all piety, transmitted from patriarchal times and preserved in Genesis, what emphasis is given, how important are the additions made in the teaching more immediately Mosaic! The absolute oneness and spirituality of the Divine nature, His unspotted sanctity, His overflowing goodness, His great compassions! And then the Ten Commandments! "The law was given by Moses," and no tongue can tell the service rendered to the cause of virtue and of God by those waymarks and warnings,—those ten words of infinite

weight which have kept on the path so many wayward feet, and which have haunted so many consciences till the wanderer returned,—that great manual of duty, that little hand-book of human happiness, which we call the Two Tables, or Decalogue.

But if the law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Still mightier in deed and in word than the great legislator, needing no wonder-working rod, for He had but to speak and it was done, needing no thunder nor trumpet to overture His discourse and astonish His audience, the Lord Jesus gave a new idea of goodness and a new exhibition of the Godhead. With Moses the first prodigy was to turn water into blood, with Jesus the beginning of miracles was to turn water into wine; and on the key-note thus sounded in the case of each the subsequent anthem went forward: severity, stern sanctions, the one,—grace, attraction, encouragement, the other; the shekinah of the one burning with fire, and fenced round with the warning, "Put off thy shoe, for this is holy ground," heaven so opening over the other as to delight whilst it dazzled, and make frail mortality still exclaim, "Master, it is good to be here." How mild the accents, yet how holy and how pure! how penetrating, how satisfying! softly falling like the dew, mellifluous as the manna, and filling each

capacity, the greatest and the smallest, like the snow which gives its convenient portion to the crocus-cup or the lichen, and of which there is enough for the widest valley! Not that Jesus ignored or set aside the law. "The law was *given* by Moses," but it *lived* in Jesus Christ. That holy law of God, He hid it in His heart, and so it circulated in the vital current of His blood, mantling in His cheek when a sinless indignation flashed on stupendous wickedness, and flowing forth in the more familiar tear which bewailed the fate which this wickedness entailed,—gleaming in the gracious smile which reassured the broken-hearted penitent, and bursting forth in that crimson sweat which, fainting yet pursued, and which, conquering its own reluctance, cried, "Father, Thy will be done!" But if in Jesus the law was fulfilled, so in Jesus God was manifest. True: He spoke many kind words concerning God, and some very solemn ones: some very solemn ones,—for it was He who said, "If ye forgive not them which trespass against you, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses." It was He who said, "It is better to enter into life halt or maimed, than having two hands or two feet to be cast into hell-fire." But mostly kind and comforting—indeed all kind and comforting, if we only listen to them sitting at the Master's feet, and so under the shadow of the

Mediator's wing. Indeed, so kind and comforting, that He has only one name for the Most High,—"the Father," "your heavenly Father,"—inviting us in His name to take it up and say, "Our Father which art in heaven." But just as the Lord Jesus lived the law, so it was chiefly by His life that He let forth the glories of the Godhead—and for that manifestation of Him whom no man hath seen we must go not more to the words than to the mien, the movements, the works of Immanuel. "Moses verily was faithful in all his house," but it was the faithfulness of a servant,—"but Christ as a Son over His own house,"—a Son the express image of the Father—the Only-Begotten, familiar with His Father's thoughts from all eternity, and giving forth no new revelation as it gradually dawned upon Him, but freely acting forth the Father's mind as it had been from the beginning—acting forth as far as a true body and reasoning soul gave scope for the manifestation. And so for the knowledge of Him with whom we have to do we must look to His incarnate Son. If we wish to know what are the prayers which God will not regard, we must note those which Jesus did not answer. If we wish to know what is the exigency in which God will not or cannot rescue, we must find out the cases where imperilled discipleship vainly exclaimed, "Save, Lord, or I perish." If we wish to know

what is the sorrow of which the Most High is a heedless or unconcerned spectator, we must mark the sufferers against whose cry of anguish Jesus stops His ear, we must mark the graves by whose brink He stands without a tear. If we wish to know what is the unpardonable sin and who are the penitents who need ask no forgiveness, we must find some sinner who clasped the feet of Jesus and was shaken off—we must find some blaspheming renegade, some cursing and swearing apostate, at whom Jesus would never look again, and regarding whom He made a special exception, 'Go and tell them all (save Peter) that I go before into Galilee and shall be glad to meet them again.'

The likeness between Moses and Messiah we might pursue much further, and the parallel would not be the less impressive because in each particular we should find that the type was excelled or surmounted by the antitype. For instance, as a man, as a model or ensample to his people, Moses was nearly perfect; but although *almost* he was not *altogether*, and in the ebullition at Meribah the human frailty broke through. Not so with Jesus. If angry He sinned not. He never spake unadvisedly with His lips, and complete as was His code, sublime as were His maxims, there was a finish in His goodness, a divine felicity in His entire demeanour, which leaves Him unique and

unapproachable among the sons of men. Again, the miracles which Moses wrought were by a delegated power: the rod he carried was a borrowed sceptre, and a higher power wrought all its wonders. But affluent in His own omnipotence, the will of Jesus was itself a fiat, and a touch, a word, a look was followed by a feast for five thousand guests, by a blind man's cure, by a dead man's resurrection. Once more, as a mediator Moses had compassion on the ignorant and on them that were out of the way; and he had great power with God. But it is Jesus alone who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, and Jesus is the only mediator who in His intercession says, "Father, I will." And yet again, as the leader of the rescued Israelites Moses carried them far. He conducted them safely through the Red Sea and through the howling wilderness; but he did not bring them into the Promised Land. But Jesus is Moses and Joshua both in one. Those whom He brings out of sin's bondage He carries through and sees them safe to the better country. His guidance never ceases, His eye never dims, His interest never flags; but those who once place themselves beneath His guardianship, lo! He is with them to the end.

So, Moses is no isolated personage. He is "that prophet" (John i.) who prefigures the greatest

of all, and when we survey him we are looking at one who is looking unto Jesus. This view of his character and attitude we shall often find instructive. Like his own rod it will draw water from the flinty rock, and convert into green pastures the passages most arid-looking in all the history.

Meanwhile, it is with the prophet like unto Moses that we have expressly to do; and it behoves us to ponder the words here subjoined, "Whosoever will not hearken unto my words which He shall speak in my name, I will require it of him," or, as Peter gives the purport, "Every soul that will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." If there were any Hebrews so besotted that they refused to quit Egypt, they had only one opportunity. No second Passover came. No new Moses appeared. The Red Sea never sundered again; but by their own infatuation, cut off from their own people, they drudged out the dreary years in ignominious thankless bondage, and died in slavery.

When Peter adduced this precedent he was addressing his Hebrew countrymen, and he added, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers. Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from your iniquities." Without any straining—

retaining their real point and spirit—we might apply the apostle's words to a congregation like this, and say, "Ye are children of the prophets and children of the covenant. Many of you have had parents pious and God-fearing. You have been trained in Bible-classes and Sabbath-schools. You know a large extent of saving truth, and you have enjoyed an immense amount of helpful Christian influence. If you were deciding now, what an advantage you would have over the converted Pagan, or even over the converted Papist! How friendly are all the surrounding circumstances; how propitious to your progress! To you God gives the first offer of the Saviour. Suffer Him to bless you. Suffer Him to bless you by turning you from your iniquities."

"Well, and (you say) it is not much that hinders. In turning from my iniquities, I have not to give up the gambling, or the drinking, or the profligacy which you were describing last Lord's day; and as far as any rampant wickedness is concerned, I fancy that I might soon become a Christian. But I do not feel disposed. I do not see the need. I know that I am not what you would call a religious person; but I hope that on the whole I do my duty by one and all, and *worldly* as you call me, I think I have some virtues not possessed by all the godly." That is to say, you

are in the position of an Israelite to whom with his divine commission Moses might have gone, and he should answer, "No, I thank you. My master is humane. He does not set me any revolting task, like so many of my brethren. I am neither scavenger nor swine-herd, but I wear this handsome livery. And I like the leeks and the onions, the melons and the cucumbers; and have no notion of going out into a stony desert to fast and hear your sermons." Oh, what an abject! what a mean and unmanly spirit which can thus plead for leave to continue in bondage! how well he deserves to have his fetters made strong, and when times grow hard with him, and his taskmaster turns on him and delivers him to the tormentors, who shall pity him?

Yes, indeed, Christ's offer is irksome. You have learned to like Egypt. You cannot bear to be called a slave, and yet you are not free. You are in bondage to the world—to opinion and fashion; there are friends whose contempt or coldness you could not stand. You are in bondage to the flesh; you are the slave of appetite or indolence; you cling to the flesh-pots; you deprecate the march and the desert, the fatigue and the fighting. Or one is your master, even the devil; and by some fallacy or sophism that father of lies persuades you to put off or refuse altogether. Take care that you are not taken at your word! Seeing you hold

salvation so cheap, take care lest when the Lord's ransomed set forward you be not left in the house of your bondage. Take care lest God swear in His wrath, "They shall not enter into my rest."

Finally, you who follow Christ, how much you owe Him! How much you owe Him already, and how much more you shall owe Him before all is over! Of your salvation He is the Captain. Of His intercession you may form some idea from that memorable prayer, "O Lord, this people have sinned a great sin; howbeit, if Thou wilt forgive their trespass; and if not—then I pray Thee blot out my name from Thy book." But as that is a name which cannot be blotted out, forgiveness asked by the great Intercessor cannot be refused. If once He takes charge of you, He will see you safe through. Of all guides and leaders, He is the meekest and most magnanimous; and those who sing the song of Moses and the Lamb will have the same tale to tell of murmurings forgiven and mercies multiplied—of a patience which never intermitted and a love that never was exhausted.

VIII.

Signs and Wonders—The Plagues.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee; and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt, by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them. And Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded them, so did they."—EXOD. VII. 1-6.

GOD'S contributions to the world's stock of knowledge and goodness have been sent through the persons of our fellow-men; and of these Heaven-sent messengers, of these mediums for bringing the mind of God to earth, none is more remarkable than Moses. As the Tell or Washington of early Eastern story, he would have claims on our admiration; as the first assertor of national independence; as the leader of the first war of religious emancipation; as the liberator of his people; as the divinely-

commissioned conductor of the Exodus. But on the world's gratitude he has claims still stronger. Through whose hand was it that God issued to mankind the Decalogue, and gave a rule of conduct at once so plain, so portable, so comprehensive, as the Ten Commandments? To whom are we indebted for the first promulgation of the unity, the spirituality, the self-existence, and all-pervasive providence of the Most High? Who was it that took in "that little piece of holy ground,"—the Jewish nationality,—and at once fencing the enclosure and trenching the soil, prepared the plat or bed in which Christianity should fifteen centuries afterwards strike root and grow till large enough to be transplanted into the outside world? Who is the penman of the Pentateuch? To whom are we indebted for those foundation-truths, those fundamental oracles on which David and Isaiah, Paul and John, have built up the fabric of Divine Revelation?

In the person of Moses the Most High inaugurated a new era in His dealings with mankind. Noah hardly excepted, Moses was the first in that series of prophets who were at once *seers* and *workers of signs*. He was the first, as the apostles were the last, who wrought miracles in attestation of their Divine commission, and to show that God was with them. And as the first example of a Divine mes-

sage accredited by miracles, as the commencement of that system in the Divine dealings where Heaven-imparted truth calls in as its seconder or sanction Heaven-imparted power, the narrative is at this point peculiarly instructive.

After men have climbed it is a common trick to spurn away the ladder. They push away the ladder, and then at the top of their airy pinnacle they shout to spectators and flap their sleeves, as if these were the wings by which they had mounted. So now-a-days there is a disposition to speak contemptuously of miracles. "Moral truth is as much more sublime than prodigies or portents as mind is greater than matter; and the Sermon on the Mount is more full of God than the resurrection of Lazarus;" whilst some put it differently, and say, "The course of nature is much more stupendous than any possible interruption. The perpetual miracle which raises that fig-tree from an atom, and out of dirty mould and viewless vapour builds up its broad-leafed canopy, is greater than the casual miracle which in a moment blasts it." Or to come to the actual case before us:—

"Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God:
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes:
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries."[1]

But it won't do to stand on the top of the obelisk

[1] *Aurora Leigh*, 304.

and wave your cloak, pretending that your own wings took you thither. It won't do, Master Poet or Philosopher, to perch on some top-truth of Revelation, and make-believe that you soared straight up there with a few easy flaps of your own intellectual pinions. Here is the ladder lying at the foot, with the marks on every round of miry shoes and hob-nails somewhat heavy.

You say, "Prodigies are for barbarians and babes; but the mature man, the philosopher, prefers great truths and high principles to vulgar signs and wonders." And in this the Word of God so far agrees with you. "Tongues," says the apostle, "are a sign to them that believe not." As soon as men are believers, they don't need this prodigy to arrest their heedlessness and convince their incredulity. And says Jesus himself, "It is an evil generation that seeketh after a sign." If it were sufficiently sincere the truth would be its own witness. But unfortunately in its first coming into a world like this, God's truth does not find men friendly but hostile: it finds them not eagerly awaiting its advent but rather looking the other way. It needs to catch their eye, and conquer their aversion. As babes or barbarians it has to appeal to their faculty of wonder; and as more or less besotted, more or less wedded to evil or error, it needs to appeal to their fears or their self-interest, and convince them

that if it comes to a contest the truth is stronger than they.

Wheatstone or Faraday is not always sending paper kites up into the clouds or drawing sparks from a coated phial in order to convince himself that electricity exists. "Excuse me, my good friend," he would be apt to say, "but I am far past that. I not only believe that the thing exists; but to my mind it is present everywhere. It is not the jar alone, but this room that is full of it; and you need not send up for it to the clouds, for at this moment you and I are under its powerful influence. Rather than be repeating evermore these elementary experiments, I love to trace still further its operation, and meditate upon its laws." And yet he will be far from despising the day of small things. He knows that in the whole of this matter a hundred years ago men were as barbarians or as babes, and that if their feeling of wonder had not been roused, if their sense had not been dazzled, babes and barbarians they must have still remained. It was by working what may be called *scientific* signs and wonders,—it was by drawing a flash of fire from the human body, it was by drawing lightning from the clouds, that Dufaye and Franklin waked the wonder of the world, and founded a new science; and therefore he looks back with reverence to that paper kite or Leyden jar as the parent of the

electric telegraph and the transformer of modern metallurgy. Each of them was a disturber or interrupter of the course of nature; but without the interruption they produced the true course of nature would never have been known: without the spark or flash which these disturbers elicited, the perpetual presence and the wondrous working of the latent power would never have been surmised.

So with the signs and wonders which for a moment interrupting the usual course of Providence, made the existence of that Providence more palpable. So with the signs and wonders which from time to time breaking the majestic silence of the Eternal, like a tocsin from the firmament have startled the world's apathy, and at once strengthened faith and confounded incredulity.

Standing as we do on the clear high vantage of a completed Christianity, it is difficult for us to get back into the times of ignorance. Even amongst the professed rejecters of Revelation there is a general admission of its sublimest truth, and few deny the existence of the one Supreme Creator, infinitely wise, irresistibly powerful. But once on a time it was very different. Egypt believed in its own gods, and left Ethiopia and Canaan free to believe in theirs, and although the children of Israel should have known that the God of Abraham was the one true God, they were not absolutely sure. It looked

too like as if Abraham's God was less kind or powerful than Egypt's gods; and we have reached that most interesting and eventful period when Jehovah arose from His place and began to prove that He was not merely one God among the many, but that there was none besides the great I AM supreme, self-existent, exclusive of every other.

The first mind which it was needful to satisfy was that of Moses himself. Possessing the knowledge which we find embodied in the Book of Genesis, we may assume that his theology was sound. Believing in that God who created heaven and earth, with whom Enoch walked, who had swept a crime-laden race away, who had received Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to their eternal homes, in the meditative seclusion of Horeb Moses could sing the 90th Psalm, and could look back with serene contempt on the bull-adorers and beetle-worshippers amongst whom he had passed his boyhood. But the faith which assures the heart in calm retreats is not always enough for energy and action; and if there ever was a man to whom it must have been a hardship to quit the solitary place, with its continual sabbath, that man was the fugitive from Pharaoh's palace,—the meek, meditative, unambitious, world-weary Moses. And yet for God's great design it was needful that the recluse should be aroused and hurried forth from his retirement; it was needful that the

hermit should be quickened up into a hero; and so that God, in whom he had long believed, burst upon his view in a bright and startling manifestation. To Moses that burning bush was itself a sign, and one would have almost thought that a Divine commission given from the midst of the flaming miracle would have insured instant compliance. But even after other difficulties were dispelled, an obstacle seemingly insuperable occurred to Moses in the incredulity of his own countrymen. "To say nothing of persuading Pharaoh, how shall I gain the confidence of my own brethren? They will not believe me. They will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." And so, to furnish him with credentials to his own countrymen, just as the burning bush had been sign sufficient to himself, the Lord supplied him with three portable signs (so to speak), and gave him the power of performing three prodigies, which should be as well adapted to the crass and untutored minds of his brethren as the beautiful sign of the burning bush had been adapted to his own. 'Turn that rod into a serpent, from a serpent back into a rod again; draw thy hand from thy bosom; it is leprous; do it again and it is sound. And change into blood the water of the Nile; for if they will not believe thee, they will believe the sign, and if one sign fail a second will succeed.' And thus fortified, Moses set forth for Egypt. Along with Aaron

his brother, who, divinely directed, came forth to meet him, he reached it at a moment when the people's anguish was kindled afresh by the accession of the new despot and the infliction of further atrocities. The brothers delivered their message, and "did the signs in the sight of the people; and the people believed." Their deliverers had come opportune as angels from heaven, and grateful to Abraham's God, who at last had looked on their affliction, "they bowed their heads and worshipped" (Exod. iv. 29-31).

A harder task remained. Moses and Aaron needed no further sign. The burden of the Lord was upon them, and God's hand thrust them forward. So to speak, they could not help themselves, and you would say it should not have been difficult to rouse the hopes of sighing, wretched bondmen. But to beard a tyrant on his throne—to persuade a proud and obstinate king to surrender two millions of subjects, including the most useful labourers in the land—was an undertaking sure to be followed by discomfiture and personal destruction, unless backed by Omnipotence and enforced by the outstretched arm of Jehovah. And therefore to stem and concuss into submission the oppressor of Israel and the champion of Egypt's false gods—to avenge the wrongs of ages and signalize in its commencement Jehovah's war with idolatry, Heaven opened its terrible artillery

and with plague upon plague crushed down the key-post of Paganism, the stronghold of Egypt.

On these plagues we have no intention to dilate, but we invite attention to one or two general remarks regarding them.

1. Pharaoh threw down the gauntlet. "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice, to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go." Pharaoh cast himself on the protection of the idols of Egypt, and launched an insulting defiance at the God of Israel. And the first retort was on that idol which might well be considered the best friend and greatest benefactor of Egypt, the Nile, whose current was instantly converted into a fluid so blood-like that its delicious waters were no longer drinkable, and the fish in which it abounded died. In like manner, the magicians who mimicked the earlier miracles, who by sleight of hand (to say nothing of supernatural assistance) gave the impression as if they could do on a small scale what Moses' rod did over all the land, these magicians were driven off the field when the infliction became a corporeal malady, and personal. "The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and all the Egyptians."

2. A second remark which we venture to hazard is a certain congruity betwixt these supernatural

visitations and the land on which they were inflicted. Although the rapidity with which they succeeded one another, although the circumstance of their coming on and departing whensoever Moses gave the word, and no sooner, although the exemption of Goshen when the rest of Egypt was overwhelmed, all show the Hand Omnipotent from which they came, yet the visitations themselves were more or less characteristic of the country and congruous to it. The vials were inverted by an unseen Power, but the channels in which the vengeance flowed were the courses already cut by phenomena more or less familiar to the people. For instance, the Nile, which this time, in the beginning of the year, flowed with blood, is apt every June to assume a reddish colour. Frogs, with gnats, flies, and other insect plagues, are to this day no small source of misery in Egypt; and boils are of common occurrence among the people, and murrain among the cattle; and it may help to vivify the sacred text if from the pages of the Prussian explorer Lepsius I give two extracts, detailing a hail-storm and a locust-shower, as he encountered them about the close of the year 1842.

Hail.

"Winter began with a scene that will ever remain impressed upon my memory. I had ridden out to

the excavations, and as I observed a great black cloud coming up, I sent an attendant to the tents, to make them ready against it, but soon followed him myself, as it began to rain a little. Shortly after my arrival a storm began, and I therefore had the tent-ropes made fast; soon, however, there came a pouring rain that frightened all our Arabs, and sent them trooping to the rock-tomb, where our kitchen is situated. Of our party, Erbkam and Franke were only present. Suddenly the storm grew to a tremendous hurricane, such as I have never seen in Europe, and hail fell upon us in such masses as almost to turn day into night. I had the greatest difficulty in hunting our Arabs out from the cavern, to bring our things to the tombs under shelter, as we might expect the destruction of our tents at any moment; and it was no long time ere first our common tent broke down, and then, as I hurried from it into my own, to sustain it from the inside, that also broke down above my head. When I had crept out, I found that my things were tolerably well covered by the tents, so that I could leave them for the present, but only to run a greater risk. Our tents lie in a valley, whither the plateau of the Pyramids inclines, and are sheltered from the worst winds from the north and west. Presently I saw a dashing mountain flood hurrying down upon our prostrate and sand-covered tents, like a giant serpent

upon its certain prey. The principal stream rolled on to the great tent; another arm threatened mine, without quite reaching it. But everything that had been washed from our tents by the shower was torn away by the two streams, which joined behind the tents, and carried into a pool behind the Sphinx, where a great lake immediately formed, which fortunately had no outlet.

"Just picture the scene! Our tents, dashed down by the storm and heavy rain, lying between two mountain torrents, thrusting themselves in several places to the depth of six feet into the sand, and depositing our books, drawings, sketches, clothes, and instruments, yes, even our levers and crowbars; in short, everything they could seize, in the dark, foaming, mud ocean. Besides this, ourselves wet to the skin, without hats, wading into the lake to the waist to fish out what the sand had not yet swallowed. And all this was the work of a quarter of an hour, at the end of which the sun shone radiantly again, and announced the end of this flood by a bright and glorious rainbow.

"For several days we fished and dug for our things. Some things were lost, many were spoilt; the greater part of all the things that were not locked up inside trunks or chests bore more or fewer marks of this flood."[1]

[1] Lepsius's *Discoveries in Egypt*, pp. 27-29.

Locust Storm.

"I had descended into a mummy-pit, to open some newly-discovered sarcophagi, and was not a little astonished to find myself in a regular snow-drift of locusts, which, almost darkening the heavens, flew over our heads from the south-west from the desert in hundreds of thousands to the valley. I took it for a single flight, and called my companions from the tombs, that they might see this Egyptian wonder ere it was over. But the flight continued; indeed, the work-people said it had begun an hour before. Then we first observed that the whole region, far and near, was covered with locusts. I sent an attendant into the desert, to discover the breadth of the swarm. He ran for the distance of a quarter of an hour, then returned and told us that, as far as he could see, there was no end to them. I rode home in the midst of the locust-shower. At the edge of the fruitful plain they fell down in showers, and so it went on the whole day till the evening, and so the next day from morning to evening, and the third; in short, to the sixth day, and in weaker flights much longer. The Arabs are now lighting great fires of smoke in the fields, and clattering and making loud noises all day long, to preserve their crops from the unexpected invasion.

It will, however, do little good. Like a new animated vegetation, these millions of winged spoilers cover even the neighbouring sandhills, so that scarcely anything is to be seen of the ground; and when they rise from one place, they immediately fall down somewhere in the neighbourhood; they are tired with their long journey, and seem to have lost all fear of their natural enemies—men, animals, smoke, and noise—in their furious wish to fill their stomachs, and in the feeling of their immense number. The most wonderful thing, in my estimation, is their flight over the naked wilderness, and the instinct which has guided them from some oasis over the inhospitable desert to the fat soil of the Nile vale."[1]

To this land of locusts and hail-storms, of epidemic boils and disastrous murrain, the warnings of Moses were abundantly intelligible. They were not threatened with an unknown visitation, but were in the predicament of a land like Britain, if, in the course of a short year or so, we were forewarned of nine such plagues as a frost in June, a potato-blight, the Hessian fly, the cholera. When they were foretold, we could have no difficulty in understanding what was threatened, and when they came on the predicted day, and on the predicted day when such of them as could go away departed, we should have

[1] Lepsius's *Discoveries*, pp. 49, 50.

no difficulty in identifying them as God's own messengers.

3. Whilst, however, the plagues were of a kind to demonstrate conclusively the superiority of Jehovah and His commissioned messengers over the idols and their ministers, they were so conducted as to leave Pharaoh a free agent all throughout. He was not put on the actual rack or held over a slow fire till his cruel hand relaxed and let the Hebrew bondmen go. The appeal was loud, and each time that it was repeated he and his people were shaken more severely than before; but after every demand there was a respite, a pause, an opportunity to ponder, and either yield the point or recall a past concession. During that reprieve or lull, nine times repeated, the result was uniform: "The heart of Pharaoh was hardened;" he turned on his hapless serfs as savage, and scowled on their mysterious Protector as sullen and defiant as before. And whilst we are so far admitted into the painful secret, whilst "the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared through all the earth," so that "God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," we can so far understand how naturally, in a proud and imperious mind, the process went

on, and how truly it may also be said, "Pharaoh hardened his own heart."

For, first of all, there was always time for doing it. Except on the last occasion, when the Israelites stood marshalled and ready to move off amidst the amazement and anguish consequent on the death of the first-born,—except on that last occasion the Israelites were never ready to take Pharaoh at his word; but if he made some small concession over-night, he was able to recall it in the morning. And who will deny that he was strongly tempted? To let his own vassals go—to create a gap so instantaneous and so wide in his kingdom's industry; to part with the best bone and sinew of the realm, was no small sacrifice. And then the humiliation: to have that son of a slave glorying over him, to receive the dictation of that runagate; to let Apis and Osiris bow before the Hebrews' God, what would Nimrod and his Ethiopian neighbours say? Besides, what if all this time he was under some frightful spell, some horrible sorcery or glamour? Assuredly there was something very startling in the swift succession of so many plagues, and the God of Israel must have great power to send them, and to enable his servant to predict them. But perhaps the gods of Egypt would triumph yet. It seemed as if they too could turn water into blood and a walking-stick into a serpent; and they might yet

enable their votary and champion to hold his own and avenge these insults. And so, for as often as he was reproved, Pharaoh still hardened his neck, until he was suddenly cut off, and that without remedy.

Such is still the method of God's procedure. No force is laid on the human will, yet some are allowed to harden themselves, whilst others are mercifully constrained to have mercy on themselves and flee to the Saviour of souls.

The process is insidious,—the self-hardening one I mean. God often reproves. He gave Pharaoh ten times a place of repentance, but the hard man persisted, and was likely hoping still to escape when he was suddenly cut off, and that without remedy.

A man begins a course of dishonesty. Living beyond his income, he must accommodate himself with money passing through his hands; but the income of next year does not fill up the deficit, and as the discrepancy has been so dexterously concealed as to elicit no inquiry, he goes on and on peculating and appropriating and purloining. And God goes on reproving. He takes the man to church, where he hears a sermon on the text "Thou shalt not steal;" but the embezzling goes on. He takes him to a court of justice, and lets him listen to a dreadful case, the facsimile of his own where

from respectability and seeming affluence the delinquent is hurled down to the shame and wretchedness of convicted felony, and under this painful homily on righteousness and judgment to come Felix trembles; but after a few days the work of appropriation is once more resumed. And then to remind him that an eye is on him, his merciful Reprover elicits from some one's lips a sentence which greatly startles him. The cold sweat breaks, his face is ashes, and from the ominous allusion he fancies himself found out. But by and bye he finds that he was wrong, and emboldened by impunity, as if it gave an actual sanction to his crime, he launches out more largely and with increasing confidence, till some evening from the heart of a ruined home, and the unavailing grasp of affection shrieking forth its agony, he is hurried off to the trial which ends in a felon's doom and a convict's infamy.

Or the social glass has grown into the cup which does inebriate, and the misfortune is none the less because the sin is great; and in great mercy God's Word and Spirit and Providence for a long time reprove. If you don't put in the pin, says the doctor, I won't answer for the consequences. If you don't reform, says his employer, next term we part company. If you don't repent, says God, you shall perish. And there is not only remonstrance but reproof One night he comes home and finds

that he has been robbed in the tavern or on the road from it of his quarter's salary. "Ah! that comes of my drinking." Another day he wakes up in a public hospital, and sees his miry garments hanging by the bedside, whilst they are applying iced lotions to his temples. "How came I here?" And when he hears that he was picked off the pavement with a threatened fit, "Ah! that too comes of drinking. I must really take the pledge." But for as often as he has been reproved, no sooner is he well than his spirit again is hardened, and reeling home in the moonlight beside the canal, the policeman hears a plunge, and he himself feels a momentary shock, and then opens his eyes,—not in the hospital,—not in his own home,—not even amongst the fumes of the tap-room,—but where there is no more place for repentance, and where for reproof habitually resisted there remains no remedy.

Pharaoh ten times reproved, yet always persisting,—Pharaoh repeatedly subdued, yet once more rebelling,—Pharaoh humbling himself one day under the mighty hand of God, and another day cut off in fierce conflict with Jehovah, stands forth to all time a glaring example. It tells how resolute and resilient is the stout heart of the sinner,—how, like a deceitful bow, when the pressure is withdrawn, it will bound back again. And it tells how guilty is the war and how bootless will be the battle with

Omnipotence. Oh, brethren, may there be found amongst us no self-hardening Pharaoh,—none quitting the parental roof, or Sabbath after Sabbath retiring from the sanctuary with a heart still joined to his idols, and determined not yet to forsake his sins. What will you do in the day when God contends with you? It is a fearful thing to fall into His hands, and who ever hardened himself against Jehovah and prospered?

IX.

The Passover.

"Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them."—HEB. XI. 28.

THE ninth plague of Egypt was a deluge of darkness. Neither an eclipse of the sun, nor like anything to which the people were accustomed, it lasted three days, and was so dense that not only was labour arrested but men could not venture forth from their dwellings. A "thick darkness," a "darkness that might be felt," coming over a land so serene and so sunny, it was an ominous and appalling visitation, and might almost make them think that the end of the world had arrived. Whatsoever might be the secondary causes employed for its production, the language would imply that artificial lights were of little avail, and that social intercourse and ordinary occupation were generally arrested beneath the murky inundation. And beyond many of its predecessors this judgment seems to have shaken Pharaoh and his subjects. Their god, the sun, was frowning—or, in

the grasp of some mightier divinity, he was overpowered and unable to help his worshippers. Goshen excepted, all Egypt was under a funeral pall, and, over and above its actual discomfort, it filled superstitious minds with dread as foreshadowing some dismal catastrophe.

Pharaoh was effectually frightened, but there was no change in his feelings towards either Israel or Israel's God; and therefore as soon as the murky flood subsided, as soon as the darkness palpable had rolled away, his spirits rose again, and he proposed a compromise. The original demand had been, "Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness,"[1] and now he offered to let the people go, but as a pledge for their return they must leave in Egypt their possessions. Terms like these could not for a moment be entertained, and finding Moses still insist on an absolute and unconditional outgoing, Pharaoh flew into a passion. "Begone! Take care that I never see thy face again: for in the day that thou seest my face again thou shalt die."

Terror may be a powerful taskmaster, but something else is needful to renew the heart and transform the affections. As he lay in his palace during those days of darkness Pharaoh got time for reflection; and even if he refused to think of

[1] Exodus v. 2.

Israel's rights and of the cruelties inflicted on them by himself and his predecessors, there could be no question that there had come to their rescue a powerful protector. This Jehovah was mighty in battle, and in nine successive encounters he had discomfited Thoth and Phrah, Isis and Osiris, the time-honoured guardians of Egypt, and had put shame on those great idols the sun and the river Nile. Pharaoh for the instant felt powerless in the hand of this unknown God, so awful and irresistible, and inwardly vowed that as soon as the present visitation ended he would make peace with Him by giving up the point at issue. But the visitation ceased, and along with it much of his consternation vanished. Here, on the fourth morning, the sun shone out so clear, and through the translucent margin the water-lilies looked up into the sky which reflected its unclouded mirror under them. Of such a pitchy night it was wonderful that no trace remained: the river was not ink, the blossoms were not black, and as the tramp of foot-guards crushed the open court, as barges went flashing up the stream, and the gay life of Memphis fluttered forth like the phantoms of a dream, the fears and vows of the monarch fled away, and he had courage to put Moses off with a poor and pitiful concession.

Who knows it not? On the stormy lake, pale

as ashes, Volney drops on his knees and cries, "Christ, save me! O Christ, have mercy upon me!" and when the storm is over and they are safe on shore, he begs his friends not to reveal his weakness. Detected in a deed of dishonesty which he declares to be his very first—for there never was a thief who was not a liar also—the purloiner calls Heaven to witness that if you will only let him off this once, he will hereafter rather starve than steal; and six months afterwards he is at the bar of the Old Bailey. Laid on a bed of sickness the toper is plainly told how urgent is his case, and how many are the chances against him, "Oh, dear doctor, if you will only set me on my feet this once, I give you my solemn word, I never taste another drop," and the vow is kept till he is pronounced past danger. In imminent alarm—with lying refuges swept away—like Pharaoh in the dark left all alone with Israel's God, you have seen the folly of a godless life and the terribleness of unprepared death, and have promised and protested that as soon as this crisis was over you would make God's friendship your first effort and His service your chief concern. But if it be a yew-tree staff, as soon as the pressure is taken off it will start up straight as ever; and if it be the same proud, self-sufficient, self-indulgent nature as before, it may bend for a moment beneath the mighty

hand of God, but like a deceitful bow rebounding is sure to turn back erect and stiff as ever.

The milder warning was thrown away, and now the great woe was coming. God's ambassador had been dismissed. Under pain of death Moses had been ordered from the presence-chamber; and to the rude rebuff, "Let me see thy face no more," with the ominous dignity of one who knew his Master's might, Moses answered, "Thou hast spoken well: I will see thy face no more." And returning to his Master, the Lord said unto Moses, "Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt: after that he shall not only let you go, but shall thrust you out altogether."

This plague was so terrible that even at this distance it is awful to survey. By making men courageous the gospel makes them less cruel, and whilst it has braced up men's energies it has also softened their spirits, so that much as we may enjoy feats of prowess, the excitement of conflict, the exultation of victory, we turn away from the devastation and carnage with which they are purchased. The naked announcement that in a single night a whole nation was plunged into mourning, every family bewailing its eldest son, looked at alone and dissevered from the facts might well afflict our feelings. But we must remember the actual facts. "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord,

I will repay." Towards the Israelites the Egyptians had for long behaved so cruelly that, if suffering could be weighed or measured, we might safely aver that Israel's slow centuries of endurance were feebly countervailed by Egypt's night of anguish. Who can tell the protracted misery—the misery of a high-spirited free-roaming people who had been entrapped into sudden slavery? and what bottle but God's own could contain the tears of the broken-hearted bondmen, the tears of families torn asunder, the tears of hapless mothers entreating the stony-hearted ruffians not to hurl into the stream the babe snatched from their bosom, the tears of trampled abjects who saw their dearest kindred faint beneath their burdens or knocked down by savage overseers, and who dared not remonstrate or complain? And every one must be addressed in the language he understands. The tiger which has grasped your child—'tis no use to coax or flatter—it is only the flaming fagot you thrust into his face which makes him howl and drop his victim in the shock of sudden pain. "Israel is my first-born," said God—"let Israel my people go." But the lion only snarled, and even blow after blow made him only bite the firmer and make the bondage sorer: till an arm of fire gleamed through the night and "a great cry" confessed the burning blow, as the victim dropped from his gory

jaws bruised and palpitating, but still alive and FREE.

It was destined to prove "a night much to be remembered;" and, with a deliberateness and forethought truly divine, means were taken to engraft upon it a lesson of primary importance, and a celebration which should never be forgotten. This was to be the birth-night of Hebrew nationality, and it was to be further distinguished by a notable addition to the existing stock of revealed religion. Just as on the eve of the great event in human history, the Lord Jesus, in the fulness of His foreknowledge, instituted a Feast which should be at once commemorative and symbolic, so on the eve of the great event in Hebrew history, the Most High instituted a rite, at once a record of that fact and a revelation of God's great scheme of mercy. In each the fact and the practical lesson are indissolubly intertwined. In the Feast of the Passover, the Hebrew could not recall the outstanding incident in his nation's history without at the same time rehearsing, as in a sacred pantomime, those outstanding facts—a danger to be dreaded, and the blood of God's appointed sacrifice, as the sole protection from that danger. In the Feast of the Eucharist, the Christian cannot recall the overmastering incident in the annals of our world—the sacrifice for its sins which love incarnate offered—without also exhibiting in a brief but affect-

ing drama the life which comes through that death, and the close and friendly relation which exists between every believer and that immortal "lover of our unworthy race."

When the other plagues swept over Egypt, the land of Goshen was specially exempted; but now that this final judgment was about to fall, the preservation of the Israelites, whether in Goshen or elsewhere, was specially provided for; and the safety of every one was guaranteed who obeyed the Divine appointment and took advantage of God's own ordinance. For the time, every head of a household was exalted into a priest, and was directed to take a lamb and keep it up from the tenth day of the month till the fourteenth. On the fourteenth, in the evening, the lamb was to be slain, and its blood was to be sprinkled on the side-posts and lintel of the dwelling: "For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will *pass over* you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."

Now, what was the principle in this procedure? Death was to be abroad that night, but death is the

satellite or pursuivant of sin; and on the ground of their personal worth, their actual innocence, the Hebrews could count on exemption no more than the Egyptians. But if sin's wages be death, with God there is also forgiveness—forgiveness founded on sacrifice; and so to Israel God sent a message. He told them that the Destroyer would take his flight over all the land, but if they would only do as He directed they need fear no evil, for the plague would not come nigh their dwellings.

And so "by faith they kept the passover." They did not speculate nor argue; they did not say, "If a plague is coming it will be far more sensible to lay in a store of medicine; we should fumigate our houses; we should provide the most approved specifics; or, if an actual angel is to inflict the stroke, he will be able to distinguish *us* without so much ado. A few Hebrew letters on the door—a dash of red paint on the lintel, might answer all the purpose; but why insist on sacrifice? Why lay such strees on the blood of the slain lamb?" We do not read that any were so foolish. When Moses told the impending plague, and announced the means of preservation, "the people bowed the head and worshipped." They believed that a vial of vengeance was about to burst upon a sinful land, and they not only entered into their chambers, but shed the blood of the expiating victim, and hung out over every

threshold the symbol at once of confession and deprecation,—the crimson sign which betokened their faith in God's mercy and their compliance with God's command.

So "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." He is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world—the Divine and prospective victim who gave to all lesser sacrifices their meaning and their value. Little is the pleasure which God has in inflicting pain. Small is His delight in the death of him that dieth; but where there is evil there must be pain—where there is transgression there must be penalty—where sin exists death must follow. But so marvellous is God's mercy, He himself comes in between sin and its consequences. Rather than that the sinner should perish, He has Himself encountered the penalty, and in order to become the pain-bearer, the death-endurer, the mystery of godliness was consummated, and God manifest in flesh offered Himself a sacrifice for sin, and was then received up into glory again.

The blood shed on that great occasion is of infinite value and of ever-during efficacy; for it is the blood of God's own Son—that Lamb or Sacrifice of God which taketh away the sin of the world, and which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, for it cries not for vengeance but for mercy; it proclaims not a crime committed but a penalty

exhausted, and shows its power not in hounding the perpetrator from land to land, but in pacifying his conscience and giving it a good answer towards God.

Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, and the case of Israel may help us to understand how we are to derive the benefit. They had faith in God, and did as God directed. Though it seemed a bold thing to do, each head of a household for the time being became a priest. It did not matter what a clown he might be, what a coarse, what a sinful life up to that period he had been leading; it was now an affair of life or death, and if he did not wish death to enter his dwelling, on the head of the unblemished lamb he must lay his unused hands, and as a priest must present the offering. And all the rather because our hands are so impure, we need to lay them on the Lamb of God, and over the head of that great propitiation confess our sin and our death-worthiness; and although a priestly act, it is not presumptuous; for He himself hath made us kings and priests to His Father, entitled to present as ours His one oblation, and to ask the blessings which it bought. And although there is no literal refuge into which we can retire, and there hide us till this night of danger end, and the morning of the great deliverance dawn, "the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it

and is safe;" the promises of God, the perfections of the infinite and immutable I AM, are a secure retreat to those who know and trust them. And although there is no literal blood which we can sprinkle, we know the fact that precious blood was once shed for the sins of many; and if we are satisfied with this divinely-appointed method of escape; if for protection from coming wrath our sole dependence is the blood of Christ, the doom threatening a Christless world will *pass over* us, and emerging to that joyful awful morrow where on the one side all is gladness, on the other all is weeping and wailing, we shall join the ransomed of the Lord in that final exodus—in the escape of the redeemed from earth's darkness and the bondage of corruption.

The *principle* on which the Passover was grounded we have endeavoured to explain; but I ought to add that the preservation of any given Israelite depended not so much on his understanding the principle as on his actually employing the divinely-appointed expedient. And so I am bound to add, in the still more momentous matter of personal salvation, it is not the extent of our knowledge that will save us, but the simplicity with which we receive what God reveals, and do what God desires. We might fancy some intelligent Israelite saying, after hearing the message of Moses, "Well, it is an

admirable provision. The observance prescribed is deeply significant, and it is in wonderful congruity with the whole course of the Divine procedure;" but if he neglected to adopt it for himself, his theology would not save him. Whereas we could equally imagine some plain unlettered labourer, some guileless Israelite, who, listening to the message, understood no more than what merely met the ear, "A great desolation is to sweep the land this night, and if you wish to escape, you will sacrifice a lamb and sprinkle on your posts and lintel its blood," we could imagine him comprehending little more than the plain warning and equally plain prescription; but believing what was spoken, his faith would save him. "By faith, keeping the passover and sprinkling the blood, he that destroyed the first-born would not so much as touch him."

And so it is very important for us to remember that it is neither the extent of our erudition, nor the vividness of our fancy, nor the grasp of our philosophy, that will save us, but the readiness with which we fall in with God's requirement and do as He directs us. And happily for us His directions are exceedingly plain. Christ is set forth as a propitiation for sin, and all receive remission who have faith in His blood. Wherever there is a child of Adam there is guilt, and there the sword of the Destroyer should come down; but wherever the

blood of Christ is put forward as the piaculum or plea, there is pardon, there is protection, *there* the destroying angel passes by. And it is neither because he is a saint who hangs out the crimson sign, nor because it is a strong tower or a stately palace in which he dwells, but because God recognises the appointed token that He passes over, and says to the believer "Live."

My friends, suffer me to ask how it stands with you? I can quite imagine that some are a little tired of frequent iteration, and would be glad if we went on from these first rudiments; and perhaps in a stated pastorate we should. But yet what should be better news to those who are sinning every week than the gospel of forgiveness? or with all the wrath which God has revealed against unrighteousness, what hint can be more opportune, what exhortation should be more urgent than, "Get within, keep within, your blood-protected refuge"? My hearer, are you there? It is only on such that the morning of eternity will arise bright and gladsome, and it is only there that you can even now dwell with any reasonable sense of security. What right have you to be cheerful whose sins are not yet forgiven, and who have not yet got your sentence of condemnation cancelled? How can you be merry who, like an Egyptian, like a mere infidel, are going to lie down this night, and going to lie

down ere long in your last sleep perhaps, with no pardon entreated in a Mediator's name, and with no protection provided against the second death and the wrath to come?

Nor can a word by way of remembrance come amiss to any. The only serious evil is sin. The sight of it filled the Son of God with such concern, that in order to save some,—probably the whole of Adam's infant progeny and a large number of the up-grown and responsible,—He assumed the body which the Father prepared for Him, and as the Lamb of God He offered up Himself a sacrifice.

"O thou hideous monster, Sin,
What a curse hast thou brought in!
All creation groans through thee,
Only cause of misery!
Thou hast ruin'd wretched man
Ever since the world began;
Thou hast God afflicted too;
Nothing less than that would do.

Christ relieves us from thy guilt;
But we think whose blood was spilt.
All we feel or hear or see
Serves to raise our hate of thee.
Dearly are we bought, for God
Bought us with His own heart's blood.
Boundless depths of love divine!
Jesus, what a love was thine!"[1]

And if you want to have done with sin,—if you would not go on carrying its guilt to the grave, and

[1] Hart, Hymn 41.

its germs of immeasurable, illimitable evil into eternity,—cast yourself on the Saviour's proffered mercy, and take refuge beneath the protecting covert of His most precious blood. In so doing you comply with God's command, and cast yourself, not only on His pity, but on His truth and faithfulness. In so doing you honour the finished work of His beloved Son. In so doing you at once confess sin's enormity and proclaim the atonement's efficacy, and surrender the two main points of dispute between God and the gospel-rejecting mass of mankind. Like Israel on the night of danger, you put forth the crimson sign of confession, the red flag of deprecation, and in return Heaven waves the white flag of truce, the Saviour plants over the spot the banner of His love. *'Εν τουτῷ σημειῷ*—under this standard you are safe. The penal consequences of sin are intercepted, for the sin is forgiven; and its prolongation beyond the present life is made impossible by that most merciful arrangement which in the case of Christ's redeemed leaves all their besetting sins on this side,—all their corruption in that house of bondage from which death delivers.

X.

The Passover.

"Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them."—HEB. XI. 28.

"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."—1 COR. V. 7.

THE night before any decisive conflict is a solemn and anxious season. On the night before the battle of Ivry, which was to decide whether he should lose his life or gain a second crown, as he sat pondering a map of the battle-field the hair on one side of King Henry's head turned grey; and we like to know how the commanders felt on the night which raised the siege of Leyden, on the night before Pharsalia, on the eve of Blenheim or Waterloo.

Moses has not told us how he felt on the night before the Exodus; but he has given us some interesting glimpses of the scene, or rather the data for reproducing it. It was April, and it was the night of the full moon. The soft and silvery light fell on the white backs of the African mountains far away, and it streamed almost perpendicular on the mighty Pyramids which rose like silent symbols of eternity

straight above his head. In the royal streets of Memphis all was silent, and all was silent in the wide green plain around it,—so silent that if you had taken a quiet stroll by the river brink you might have heard the plunge of the night-feeding fishes and the pants of behemoth as he slept among the bulrushes. But although all was so silent, all was not locked in slumber. These lowly cottages,—they are Hebrew huts,—the hovels of slaves, and they have lights still burning. Peep through the chink and see what the inmates are doing. They are all of them astir; I declare not one of them has lain down, and they look like people preparing for a journey. On the table are traces of a finished repast, the house-mother is packing up her kneading-trough, with his staff in his hand the goodman is ready for the road, and the very children are excited and watching. But what 's this red mark on the door? What means this blood on the lintel? Did you hear that cry? 'Tis the moment of midnight, and some tragedy is enacted in that Egyptian dwelling, for such an unearthly shriek! and it is repeated and re-echoed, as doors burst open and frantic women rush into the street, and, as the houses of priests and physicians are beset, they only shake their heads in speechless agony, and point to the death-sealed features of their own first-born. Lights are flashing

at the palace gates, and flitting through the royal chambers; and as king's messengers hasten through the town inquiring where the two venerable Hebrew brothers dwell, the whisper flies, "The prince-royal is dead!" Be off, ye sons of Jacob! Speed from our house of bondage, ye oppressed and injured Israelites! And in their eagerness to "thrust forth" the terrible because Heaven-protected race, they press upon them gold and jewels, and bribe them to be gone.

It was a night much to be remembered, for "a nation was born" in that night. During those four hundred years Jacob's family had expanded into a multitude, the threescore and fifteen souls had grown to at least a million. But it was a mere inorganic multitude, a horde without a head, with no laws or rulers of its own,—a helpless, down-trampled tribe, held together by common hardships, and a common mother-tongue. This night, however, they sprang to their feet an exceeding great army. In the surprise of their sudden emancipation, their mouth was filled with laughter and their tongue with melody. Scarcely credible, it still was true. Jehovah had made bare His mighty arm, and Pharaoh, crushed and humbled, was entreating them to fly. With no king over them but God, with no bonds save those of mutual brotherhood, they were now their own masters, and moving towards the Promised Land.

No wonder that the night when as a nation they were born became a night ever memorable; a night much to be observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt; a night of Jehovah, to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations. No wonder if the 15th of Abib, if the night of this glorious revolution, the return of their national independence, the recurrence of the exodus, became a joyful anniversary, and if, even without Divine direction, they had agreed to keep it as a joyful feast for ever.

But of such an event the memorial was not left to mere chance or good feeling, and we have here the rules laid down which secured its continued celebration. And we know that in point of fact the celebration lasted as long as the Hebrew nation had a home, and in some of its features it is still kept up by that peculiar people. Everything was done to make it a joyful and suggestive jubilee, and if you had lived in the days of the Lord Jesus you would have seen it kept somewhat after this fashion: —First of all, the little capital would fill up with people from all ends of Palestine, would fill up and brim over like a great bee-hive, every house as full as it could hold, and thousands lodging anywhere, all bright and cheerful, hospitable, and open-handed, for the maxim was, "This day is holy unto the Lord your God, go your way, eat the fat and drink the

sweet; neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." Four days beforehand, the father of the family brought home a lamb, gentle and beautiful, sure to take the hearts of the children; but in this instance a short-lived favourite, for in four days the lamb must die. Then came the day of preparation, with its hunt through all the house in search of that leavened bread which they were commanded to put away, when every drawer and cupboard was opened, and every corner carefully explored, and if the smallest morsel was found it was brushed into a basin, and carried out to a bonfire kindled on purpose, and burnt with a prayer for its annihilation. Then came the high day, the killing of the passover, followed by the paschal feast,—a feast with specialties sure to strike the younger spectators. Instead of putting off their shoes at the door of the apartment, as usual, the guests walked in in their sandals, loins girded and staff in hand, and, not unfrequently, instead of reclining they simply stood round the table, like pilgrims or passers-by, who could hardly wait to snatch a hasty morsel. Then on the table, besides the all-important lamb, roasted, and with bitter herbs sprinkled over it, stood one great goblet of wine; and for bread, instead of the ordinary loaves, were thin airy cakes of the finest whitest flour, and a solid cake of figs and almonds, shaped like a brick, and with cinnamon

strewed over it in imitation of straw. Whilst the feast was going on, at a signal from his mother, the youngest child in the party asked—"What mean ye by this service?" and then the grandfather, or oldest guest, made answer: "Long ago our fathers lived in Egypt, and the Egyptians made them slaves. The Egyptians used them very cruelly, and our fathers cried to God. God said to the king of Egypt, 'Let my people Israel go;' but the heart of the king was very hard, and for all the plagues which God sent on Egypt the king would not let Israel go. At last God said to our fathers, 'Take every family of you a lamb, and kill it to-night, and sprinkle its blood upon your door, and stand ready to start, for this night Egypt will be glad when you go.' And that night into all except the blood-sprinkled houses went the angel of death, and smote the first-born, whilst he passed over our fathers, whom, from that house of bondage, and that night much to be observed, with a high hand and an outstretched arm, God carried to this goodly land. So we, the sons of Israel, come together to keep the great feast of the Hebrew family. We eat the unleavened bread and the lamb with bitter herbs as our fathers ate that night. This day is holy unto the Lord, and as we keep our joyful feast we sing the Great Hallel." [1]

The night of that great exodus was the birth-

[1] See Helon's *Pilgrimage*.

night of the Hebrew nationality. If we want to find the second birth-day of the world, or rather the true birth-day of God's redeemed, the period from which our human family dates its new life, its new hope and happiness, we must put two together—the one which saw the Advent effected, and that other which saw the Atonement accomplished; the one when to sinful men it was said, "To you a Saviour is born," and that other when, in the hearing of earth and heaven, this Saviour said, "It is finished." The two dates, with their intervening lifetime of thirty years, crush up into one great demiurgic day, a great divine day, with its morning softly spread on the hills of Bethlehem, with its sun going down amidst sombre clouds on Calvary; and it will depend a little on temperament, and still more on personal experience, whether it is on the morning or evening of Christ's "day" that the spirit mainly dwells: whether it be at the cradle of Incarnate Deity or at the cross of Atoning Omnipotence that it finds the wished-for consolation, and is prepared to depart in peace.

Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed for us. It is a sacrifice which needs not to be repeated, but surely it deserves to be commemorated; and if we are loyal to our Divine Benefactor and true to our own interest, we shall not fail to do thus much in remembrance of Him.

"But what mean ye by this service?" asks your son or asks the attentive spectator. And you make answer, "It was a night much to be remembered. Our whole family had fallen into captivity and servitude. We had become the thralls of Satan,—the world itself one vast house of bondage, and its different inhabitants the slaves of divers lusts and passions. But at last there came into our house of bondage one who did not originally belong to it. He was God's own Son. In His spirit there was nothing servile. The largest slave-owners tried to have Him,—Gold, Ambition, Appetite, Apollyon himself, all came up to Him, each hiding a chain behind his back, and in the other hand holding out the lures which had hardly ever been known to fail. But there was no danger of their succeeding,—He despised their image and looked them through and through—looked them through and through—saw the foul purpose in their heart, saw the noose behind their back, and finding nothing in Him, discomfited they went their way. And then as if in this prophet like unto Moses a Joseph also had come again, He went and harangued His brethren. He sought to inspire them with those high thoughts which were familiar to His own free-born spirit, and on some—sons of Zebedee and others—His words so wrought that their abject eyes looked up and they leaped as if they had already lost their

chains. And had it been with a mere taskmaster and tyrant that He had to deal—a Pharaoh or Apollyon who had no hold of right—He soon had set them free. But over all there hung a heavy sentence in sad and sinful earnest incurred, and which could not be lightly repealed. Yes, before He could give life to them—to say nothing of liberty—a life free from forfeiture, He must give a life for them. Those immediately around Him were amazed. They could not understand it. They remonstrated, they begged that He would never think of it. They little knew the exigency. But He knew it well, and in awful far-seeing self-sacrifice went forward to the hour, for the sake of which He had come into the world. It was the fulness of time, and the cup of man's wretchedness and sin ran over—the signal for redemption. That same April month had come—that same full moon was hanging over Olivet which fifteen centuries before had lighted the ransomed of the Lord from Goshen to Succoth, and the feast of Israel's Redemption was about to be kept in the stirring streets of Jerusalem. He kept it Himself, and saying to the Father, "Father, the hour is come—the hour for whose sake I came into the world," He explained to His friends as far as they were able to bear it what was about to transpire. He hinted that for the protection of sinners a life more

precious was needful than the life of this paschal lamb. "Eat this bread, and think of my body about to be broken—drink this cup, and remember my blood about to be shed for the remission of sins," and lo, he that betrayed Him was at hand: before another evening Christ the Lamb of God, our passover, was sacrificed for us. The price was paid, even that price which frees from second death and present condemnation, and with the penalty repealed and the sin-thraldom broken, those are free indeed whom the Son of God makes free.

Woful is the slavery where the higher nature is in thraldom to the lower: as happened not unfrequently in days scarcely yet forgotten. A scholar, a traveller, a high-born gentleman, fell into the hands of pirates, and was carried off to some robber-nest on the Barbary shore, and there for the rest of life was he left to languish—rowing the galley, grooming the charger, tending the cattle of his Moslem master. Could aught be more bitter and heart-breaking?—to have tastes and aspirations which he could no longer cultivate, friends and kindred whom he could no longer see, a faith which he could only confess to incur taunts and mockery? It was not the drudgery—hateful as that might be,—but it was this horrible frustration of existence—this subjection of high capacities to a thraldom coarse and cruel. And man was free-

born. Adam was the son of God, and if you are the servant of sin—if you are the slave of appetite or passion—if any sin has dominion over you,—you are in a state most unnatural—altogether unlike man's original, and most unworthy of a nature once free and strong for good. Perhaps you are not content; perhaps you are conscious of an occasional struggle. Reminiscences of the first estate come over you, like the sight of his country's flag, like the scent of some familiar flower which grew in the garden of his youth, and which fills with tears the exile's eyes—visitations come across your spirit of compunction and regret, and you exclaim, "O that I were free! O that I were strong for good! O that I were able to bring under the body and keep it in subjection! O that I could break these chains of evil habit, and claim the glorious liberty of the sons of God! I detest my tyrant, I despise myself for so long enduring his odious despotism; but oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" Are you indeed in earnest? Are you sick of sin's slavery and anxious to escape from Egypt? Then give yourself to Christ. If He claims you none can keep you, and if you cast yourself on Him He will not refuse you. Redeemed by His most precious blood, Divine justice has no desire to detain you, and Sin and Satan have no right. Rejoicing to succour those who seek to follow right-

eousness, but who confess that their strength is small, to your help will come the Holy Spirit, and, fostering the good desires which He himself enkindles, He will carry you from strength still forward unto strength, till you appear before God in Zion a redeemed and ransomed spirit—free from condemnation ever since the first step was taken, and now free from the body of death, free from besetting sins, free from temptation and all further risk of falling.

XI.

The Fiery-Cloudy Pillar.

"And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people."—Ex. xiii. 21, 22.

IN the campaigns of Alexander the Great, we are told that over his tent he caused a lofty pole to be set up, and on its summit was a brazier filled with combustible materials kept constantly burning. In this way, if any one wanted to find the commander's head-quarters he could never be at any loss, for over them floated the cloudy banner by day, the flaming beacon by night. This usage he borrowed from the Persians, but whence they derived it we do not know.

It was a good contrivance; but here we find it anticipated after a fashion so august, that except as an illustration it is of no use mentioning the expedient of the Macedonian conqueror.

On the night of their destined deliverance, when at Succoth the Israelites reached the appointed

rendezvous unorganized, and of late unaccustomed to martial movements, the inquiry of the more thoughtful would be as to their future progress and the plan of march. But Moses claimed no kingship. He had been God's messenger to Pharaoh, and he had spoken God's messages to themselves; but except that reluctant prominence to which he had been forced by the absolute command of God, Moses had assumed no personal responsibility. He did not so much as profess to know the route, and as possibly there was no one there who had performed the journey across the desert to Canaan, they might soon have found themselves a helpless mass, a weltering crowd huddled together as sheep without a shepherd, had they not espied betimes a banner in the sky, the standard of their unseen leader, and gathered reassurance from its saving sign.

The word *Shekinah* is a Hebrew term. It denotes "dwelling as in a tent or tabernacle." And although the infinite Jehovah is nowhere excluded, although there is no spot in immensity where God is absent, to our limited and place-loving minds locality is a helpful element, and—especially in the ruder and more infantile ages of our race—the Most High has condescended and met this localizing propensity. He has selected a place, and in that place has made His presence manifest or palpable. Such a place was Horeb and its burning bush, when Moses took

off his shoes; for there, on His servant's view, in visible glory, had flamed out a token of His presence, who is the heaven-filling, space-pervading I AM. Such a place for a thousand years was the Temple on Moriah; for although in His essential presence Jehovah had still His path on the waters and in regions where the wings of the morning could not penetrate, it was still with perfect truth that the worshipper recognised in that beautiful house a permanent Bethel, and feeling, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, the gate of heaven," prayed withal, "O thou that sittest between the cherubim, shine forth!" And during the desert journey such a place was this aërial pillar. So far like the flag alternately smoking and flaming, which a general would have suspended over his tent—a waving pendant by day and a torch by night,—so far like this as at once to suggest the head-quarters of their camp and the presence of their leader, it was so entirely miraculous as at once to lift their minds above Moses, and suggest to the dullest in their midst that they were under the protection of heavenly power, that the Captain of their host was Divine.

As far as the purposes of the Israelites were concerned, that cloudy-fiery pillar was the throne of the Eternal; it was the Shekinah or dwelling-place of Israel's God; it was the manifestation of His

friendly protecting presence in their midst; and often as the Israelite looked up and saw the majestic symbol, he felt assured, "And God is with us;" as in the well-known words,—

"When Israel, of the Lord beloved,
Out from the land of bondage came,
Their fathers' God before them moved,
An awful guide, in cloud and flame!

By day, along the astonished lands,
The cloudy pillar glided slow;
By night, Arabia's crimsoned sands
Returned the fiery column's glow."

There was sure guidance in its goings—a pledge of safety in its presence; by day a welcome awning in its shadow, and by night an illumination no less welcome in its forth-flowing effulgence. That pillar was Israel's pioneer. When the cloud journeyed they journeyed, and when the cloud rested the people rested. It was Israel's protector. When Pharaoh gave chase, the cloudy pillar passed from the front of the camp to the rear, and became to the one a lamp, and to the other a "horror of thick darkness," so that the Egyptians could not get near the Israelites all the night; and the only time that they fled before their enemies, was when the cloud refused to advance, and yet they wilfully rushed into battle. The cloud was Israel's angel and oracle. On one occasion it shot devouring flame, and it was by a flash from its consuming fire that, in the act of

rebellion, Nadab and Abihu fell dead; but usually, its presence was friendly and propitious. "They called upon the Lord and he answered them: He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar" (Ps. xcix.); and all the allusions show what a loved and welcome sign had that Shekinah been, and how sacred was its memory. "In the daytime he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire" (Ps. lxxviii. 14); and "He spread that cloud for a covering" (Ps. cv. 39);—to all which elements of protection, guidance, comfort, the prophet refers, in describing the millennial Church: "The Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence" (Isa. iv. 5).

This is our Etham. Let us look at the pillar of cloud and of fire which offers to guide and to guard us in our journey from Egypt to Canaan—in our journey from the new starting-point of this morning to the mansions which Jesus has prepared for those who seek a better country.

Christ is our Captain. If you are a Christian, the Lord Jesus is your Leader. He is beside you, before you; for He has said, "Lo, I am with you alway." You have declared your confidence in Him, and your affection for Him. Whither He conducts you wish to proceed; where He goes before it

is your desire to follow. But where is your guiding star, your oriflamme, your precursor pillar, your fiery-cloudy column?

On this point there can be little difficulty. The Bible is the Word of Christ. Into that brief but abounding record He has put all His mind concerning us. Like the angel of His presence (Ex. xiv. 19), we have it ever with us, the tangible token of His friendliness, the abiding exponent of His will. If we are at any loss we have only to consult its lively oracle, and if we are in any fear we have only to look up to the great and precious promise in its quenchless ray. The ultimate and true Shekinah was Immanuel. In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and when Jesus dwelt amongst us, the Godhead did, in a way most manifest and marvellous, in very deed dwell with man upon earth. Nor has He ceased to do so. In the Christ unseen but present still, earth is still God's dwelling; but if we want something palpable, local, tangible, we have it in the written Word. The mind that was in Christ was the mind that is still in the Bible; and should the Holy Spirit make a transfusion of that mind into our own, we should want no more. We should want no argument to prove that there is a heaven, for we should have the earnest already in ourselves. We should not need to go up to older disciples and more ex-

perienced believers, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus," for Christ would live in us, the light of all our seeing, the life of all our living, without whom the universe were dark to us and desolate. We should not need to say continually—

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Do I love the Lord or not?"

for with such an Alpha and Omega to our faith and affections, we should be raised above sinful doubts and selfish solicitudes, and should have only one answer to the question, "Lovest thou me?"

Christ is our Captain, and the Bible is His banner, which He bids us eye and follow. It is the fiery-cloudy pillar, regarding which He says, "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him and obey his voice, for my name is in him." Christ himself, the Incarnate Word of God, still speaks to us in the written Word; and if you ask, "Where is the Shekinah now?" We answer, "In the volume of this book. Here it is that the mind of God still maintains its residence; and here it is that He who sits between the cherubim still speaks to us. This is the enduring Bethel where the golden stair from earth to heaven can still be found—the ladder not yet drawn up and taken in, on which the shortest step and feeblest faith may find a footing; the moving

shrine, the perennial Shekinah which, whosoever follows, will find himself guided by God's counsel and at last received to His glory."

1. The Bible is a sure and certain guide. The Bible comes from God, and so it is the only book by following which we can be sure of getting back to God. Possibly enough the fiery-cloudy pillar was not at first sight particularly specious or imposing. On the banks of the Nile the Israelites may have seen a bigger bonfire, some magical and many-coloured illumination, fitted to make as great an impression for the moment, or even in the desert a sudden meteor may have launched into the sky and swift as thought along its line of light may have darted towards the promised land; but who would take for his guide an *ignis fatuus* or a shooting-star? And this sultry afternoon, wafted from the sea, a great cloud has overspread the firmament. It is broader than the cloudy column, and all the camp is grateful for its canopy. And now that the sun is setting, how poor and tame the familiar pillar looks beneath its molten chrysolite and purpled majesty! But before the first watch is over, its bosom throbs with fire, and coming down in noise and tempest, before the morrow it is utterly evanished, and as a shadow from the heat the pillar remains the only awning in all that weary land.

A poet throws out a brilliant flash, a day-dreamer gets hold of a beautiful kind-looking thought, and teases and teds it, and tosses it out into a cloud fine and filmy, and avers that it covers more space, that it is more comprehensive and more fitted to the case of mankind than Bible philanthropy; but even the spark of a neighbour's fire makes it up like gossamer, and nobody waits to see where the ashes come down; whilst theories more laboured and specious, ideal philosophies and godless philanthropies, systems exhaled from the great gulf of opinion, spread over the sky, and for a moment have it all to themselves; but at last in some Robespierrian revolution the thunder bursts, the storm comes down, and the sky is bare. But for the persistent pillar—the Word of the Lord which endureth for ever—there would be no comforter nor covert from all the sultry noon.

Says Jesus, "I am the Light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." You want pardon, and the word of Christ conducts you to the cross. You want a sense of God's friendship, you want to know that the great God does not despise you, nor the holy God dislike you; and this Word leads you to the throne of grace, and teaches you to cry, Abba, Father. You want wisdom, zeal, and prudence, serenity, and self-possession, a firm and noble con-

stancy, with a bright and engaging winsomeness; and this Word tells you of the Holy Spirit, tells you that if you entreat the aid of that great Comforter He will come to you, and replacing nature's gloom with heavenly gladness, will also give you the germs and earnests of those gracious dispositions of which a better world is full.

2. The Bible is a guide adapted to every circumstance and every season. Its shade made the pillar welcome by day, its brightness made it still more welcome by night. To any susceptible spirit it must have been a striking scene which at the noon of night opened from the outskirts of the camp; for you know that night is a great revealer. As soon as the veil of sunshine is withdrawn new worlds come forth: the azure canopy retires, heaven opens, and, as the starry vistas boundlessly withdraw, space grows infinite; and yet, what is very strange, whilst man grows little God draws near. Nor are they the great lights only, Sirius, Arcturus, and such mighty suns which burst upon our eye now that the glamour of the day is gone, but such lesser lights as the glow-worm on this bank, as the lantern flies that rain beneath the tamarisk covert. And yonder is the forefront of the camp. Brother pilgrims are locked in slumber, but He that keepeth Israel, He slumbers not. Behold the sign—that tall and silvery column which sheds down on all the tents

a softer day-spring, meet emblem of that Eye divine which never wearies, and which is beaming over His beloved even in their sleep.

So the Bible is the worker's book. "Work while it is day." To the toiling pilgrim there is direction in its pillared way-mark; there is comfort in its cool and shadowy covert. In Christ, within the camp, under His guidance, it is delightful to press on, working in faith, labouring in love, always abounding in that service so fruitful and blessed. "But the night cometh when no man can work;" the night of suffering or sadness, when all that you can do is to weep and be silent, is to sit still and wait. But if you "suffer as a Christian," your nocturnal experiences will be not a little instructive and remarkable. For one thing, now that the garish day is gone, now that the near-hand glitter has passed away, the things unseen and eternal will shine forth,—

> "Just as we see by night
> Worlds never seen by day."

But not stars alone, not the everlasting glories overhead, but little joys and blessings all around, the glow-worms of our path, whose tiny tapers had no chance till now; those lesser joys and blessings which are in almost every lot, but which no one says, "How good they are! how beautiful!" till the sun has set, and God's lesser lamps get leave to

shine, till the homely neighbour, till the wife or daughter comes in to cheer the poor man or the invalid. And then it is that the cloudy pillar of the working day becomes the brightening Pharos and soothing guardian of the wakeful night. To the sturdy thinker or practical worker, a proverb of Solomon was a motto for a whole day's direction, an argument of Paul was a problem for a long winter's discussion. But now that it is dark all over the desert, now that the watcher lies musing in his tent, and pushes aside a handbreadth of curtain, he is glad to see through the encompassing cloud coming forth a body of brightness; and as he wistfully gazes the form grows more definite, the features more divine, till on the great white throne of that radiant cloud he sees none other than the Son of Man. So move on, thou dim and mysterious column, or stand still, thou bright and transparent pillar, I follow thee. Jesus is in thee, and over green pastures, over rough deserts, through the Red Sea, through Jordan, along streets populous with friendship and resounding with life, and adown the lone valley of death, O Word of God, I follow thee.

When the Israelites were at Etham they did not know all that lay before them. On the one hand, they had no notion what a waste howling wilderness it was, nor what a terrible time was to be spent passing through it. On the other hand, they could

as little foresee the wonders which they were destined to witness, the miraculous meals, the fountain opened in the flinty rock, and above all that great episode when the voice of the Eternal broke the silence of ages, and from the pulpit of Sinai spake the Ten Commandments. All their future was hidden in the cloud of God's unsearchable wisdom, and yet in the movements of that visible pillar their own course was perfectly clear.

And so, my friends, a day like this is our Etham. We are so far on "the edge of the wilderness." A tract of untraversed time spreads before us, and although we shall not call it "a wretched land, which yields us no supplies," it is so far like the desert, inasmuch as it is a land unknown. Of one thing we may be very sure, it won't be all like Elim; it won't be all rest and relaxation, a protracted holiday, a perpetual paradise with ripe dates overhead and soft grass under foot; but there will be a good deal of toilsome marching, perhaps some fighting, a good deal of hard and hungry work, a good deal of self-denial. But let us also hope that, as in the past so still, there will be goodness and mercy. Let us hope that if an Amalek come forth against us, a face to the foe with hands uplifted to heaven may prevail. If arrested in our path, if a sudden voice exclaims "Stand still!" let us hope that it may be in order to see some great salvation. And above all let us hope

and be sure that the bread of life will not fail, nor the brook which runneth by the way, that Rock which followeth all the pilgrimage; and if any special manifestation of mercy or power be vouchsafed, let us pray that it may be a means of grace,—that like the sermon from Horeb it may write God's law deeper on our hearts, and impress His own perfections more profoundly on our awe-struck minds.

Up into this year may the angel of God's presence attend us, and make it a year of proficiency and progress,—a year of cheerful industry and patient endurance. May it add many to the Church of the saved, and in the case of God's people may it add grace to grace. Over every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, over all your habitations and all your assemblies, may the Lord create a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: and upon all the glory may He be Himself the defence.

XII.

The Red Sea.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward."—Ex. xiv. 15.

FOLLOWING their fiery-cloudy pillar, the Israelites set forth on their journey, and the first stage or two would be sufficiently exulting and sanguine. They had no conception of what lay before them, and they might very well imagine that from the house of bondage to the land of promise would be a short and pleasant promenade. As the crow flies it was little more than a hundred miles, and a week's march might bring them thither. They might be excused if they already in imagination scented the milk and honey from its fragrant hills, and if, betwixt sport and earnest, they pictured their future homes and planned about their beehives and gardens, their dairies and their farms, and felt impatient to get a glimpse of the land which would be sure to look so goodly in this most pleasant month of all the year.

But here was a surprise. It was no goodly land but a watery gulf which stretched before them, and

although by retracing their steps they might round the head of it—and this itself a sufficiently tiresome detour,—behold a new horror! A cloud of dust is rising in the rear, and it can no longer be disguised that the squadrons of Egypt are in pursuit, fierce and headlong. The sea before and that serried host behind, it was a miserable alternative to men who could neither fight nor swim, and in the panic of the moment a great wail went up to heaven, whilst burning taunts were hurled at the head of Moses. "Were there no graves in Egypt? Bondage had been better than this butchery." And only knowing that God purposed to work a great deliverance, but still ignorant of the means, Moses could only answer, "Stand still and see God's salvation. The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever."

The wondrous sequel we have read. Whatsoever be the point of the Red Sea which we select as the scene of the occurrence, and whatsoever incidental agencies of wind or tide we may call in as accessories, the substantial miracle remains; and amongst the marvellous things which Jehovah did in the land of Egypt and the field of Zoan, none stands forth more conspicuous than this dividing of the sea. As we have it in the vivid verse of Bishop Heber:—

> "He comes—their leader comes! the man of God
> O'er the wide waters lifts his mighty rod,

And onward treads; the circling waves retreat,
In hoarse deep murmurs, from his holy feet;
And the chased surges, inly roaring, show
The hard wet sand and coral hills below.
With limbs that falter, and with hearts that swell,
Down, down they pass, a steep and slippery dell;
Around them rise, in pristine chaos hurl'd,
The ancient rocks, the secrets of the world;
And flowers that blush beneath the ocean green,
And caves, the sea-calves' low-roofed haunt, are seen.
Down, safely down the narrow pass they tread;
The beetling waters bulge[1] above their head:
While far behind retires the sinking day
And fades on Edom's hills its latest ray."

The same gulf which opened a triumphal path to Israel closed over the Egyptians and whelmed them in a watery grave, fulfilling the word of the Lord by Moses, "The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them no more for ever." And in the progress of our narrative we ourselves shall see Pharaoh no more—a character which, after the manner of Cain and Herod, stands up from the sacred page awful and ominous, a seared and blasted peak without any redeeming verdure, and visited by no shower of blessing. A hard man, God left him to himself, so that he grew harder still. Proud, imperious, selfish, like the second James of England, at once a bigot and a despot, he got gradually committed to the unequal strife, and, by a succession of steps as false as they were natural, was hurried forward to the fatal issue.

[1] Storm.—HEBER.

We say that Pharaoh's course was natural. A selfish man and supremely arrogant, it would have been surprising if he had listened a single moment to the demand, "Let Israel my people go." As serfs and bondagers they were invaluable, and to let them go would be to annihilate the half of Egypt's industry. Nor was his a mind with which considerations of equity or humanity had any weight. It would not be of the smallest use to urge how long Israel had already served for nothing, and how unkind it was to keep in odious captivity men who had done nothing to forfeit freedom. He looked simply at his own interest, and scouted the monstrous proposition to give up a million of his people, and rather than be so soft he would buckle on his panoply and defy the consequences. These consequences were terrible; but once involved in the contest, Pharaoh's was not the nature to succumb; and although he could not hide it from himself that a mighty and mysterious power had risen up to rescue Israel, it became a point of honour to persist, and, assured by the magicians that the gods of Egypt were mightier than the God of Israel, he doubtless cherished the hope that they would yet arise to the succour of their champion.

But whilst all this was entirely natural, alongside of it and underneath it was a great deal which was immensely wicked. Pharaoh was a proud and heartless autocrat. Like another Lucifer, he set himself

on high, in haughty self-sufficiency, looking on all beneath him and around as created for his own aggrandizement, and this made him at once defiant of a higher power and disdainful of his fellows. In all the distress which his obstinacy entailed, we never detect one spark of compassion for his people; no royal granaries thrown open, no grants from the privy purse to mitigate the tremendous misery; and in keeping with this sullen apathy towards his own Egyptians is his savage bearing towards the Israelites. He is told that they are fainting beneath their burdens, and he is entreated to grant a holiday. Instead of at once consenting, as a good-natured prince might have done,—"Well, a week's play after four centuries' work is no great matter;" instead of instituting some inquiry, as a temperate though cold-hearted ruler might have done, Pharaoh sends that very day for the taskmasters, and bids them lay more work upon the people, and as a punishment for complaining, they are after this to find the straw with which the bricks were toughened. And in keeping with the cruelty of the tyrant is the arrogance of the autocrat: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Pharaoh was a polytheist, and on his own principle of "gods many and lords many," although he had had no reason to believe that Jehovah was pre-eminent or supreme, he had

every reason to believe that Jehovah was divine. On his own principles as a Pagan, the Hebrews had a God as well as he, and there was gross impiety in his answer, its tone of supercilious irreverence plainly showing that if the demand had been made in the name of Thoth or Phrah it would hardly have prospered better. "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice?" not obscurely intimating that in his own eyes Pharaoh was himself a deity, and throwing him open to the answers which came so awfully on behalf of the Powers Unseen, as well as on behalf of Israel's omnipotent Protector, when the river rolling down in blood, when hail and locust-rain and darkness palpable, and at last the Red Sea's closing billows made reply to the self-idolater, "I am Jehovah."

A course of conduct may be very wrong, and yet all its steps may seem quite natural. The man himself may see no alternative, and if we grant that he was right in the outset, it will be difficult to show that the particular act of robbery or bloodshed was so very far wrong. If Judas was right in his first principle, that money is the one thing needful, it was very natural that he should try to get it by selling his Master. And if Pharaoh was right in his first principle, that all things existed for the sake of the king of Egypt, and that no one in heaven or earth had any right to resist his will, it is not wonderful that he should have gone to war with Jehovah.

You say he was not right. You say that in his starting-point he was monstrously wrong; that in his first principle of proud self-idolatry he was diabolically wicked. But alas! my friends, it does not need that a man should be a monarch in order to repeat the career of Pharaoh. "Who is Jehovah?" says the voluptuary when urged to give up his sinful pleasures; "who is the Lord, that I should let my enjoyments go?" "Who is the Lord, and who is Israel?" says the worldling hastening to be rich, and who in his all-absorbing avarice has no bowels for his bondmen, no consideration for their souls or bodies, who without straw are baking his bricks, and who without a Sabbath are building his pyramid. "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice?" says the hardened gospel-hearer, who has long listened to the claims of God, and yet, entrenched in apathy, holds out, preferring to be his own all-in-all, and somehow hoping that he shall be the exception to the rule, and if the worst comes to the worst, that he shall be the sinner saved who yet never had a Saviour. In every stout and resistful spirit, in every proud, self-indulgent nature, there is a certain root of Pharaohism; and unless you humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, you will find, like Pharaoh when at last he sank like lead in the mighty waters, that it is "woe to the man who strives with his Maker."

A great word is that word of God to Israel. There they were, a sea before them far wider than their familiar Nile, and with the wild tumult of its waters very terrible; a sea before them, and on their rear, with his jingling chargers and his sounding chariots, an angry, ruthless king. Unarmed and unused to conflict, to face round and fight was for a flock of sheep to charge a pack of wolves or lions, and across that gulf they had neither wings to fly nor boats to ferry; but although still invisible, it was across that gulf that the path of the ransomed stretched, and from God's "Forward" the veiling waters fled away, and revealed the road which no created eye had seen till then.

And so whenever the fiery pillar conducts to the water's edge, and God says, "Go forward," the waves open and the weakest pilgrim passes through. Luther, you are a fine, genial fellow; you are made to enjoy this wonderful world; don't leave it by a heroic suicide. You are a father, and the solace of a thousand friends. Not a rootless stick or a rigid palisade, like these heartless, homeless, dehumanized monks, you are a green tree with roots in all our hearts; by wilful self-destruction don't dash to the earth so many nests and wound us all. But he is resolute. "Here I stand; I cannot retract, so help me God." It is the edge of the Red Sea, the very point to which the guiding pillar has brought him,

and, like the pursuing Egyptians, the Romish myrmidons have closed upon him, and ramp and ravin for his blood. But just as they are about to clutch their prey the sea sunders, their host is troubled, and as the waters stand up a wall on either hand, with conscience clean, with honour saved, with the gospel uncompromised, the Reformer passes through.

The like does not happen to every one, yet something of the sort may chance to you. Following your guide, shut up by the events of Providence, and acting under the dictates of religious principle, you have reached the edge of your Red Sea. The compliance pressed upon you would hurt your conscience; the match which they wish you to make has every advantage,—wealth, position, prospects; the only drawback is, the man's a profligate. The situation you are about to lose is lucrative, and it would be entirely to your liking, but the condition affixed to your retaining it is immoral: you must act, or utter fraud and falsehood. The trial is very terrible, but right above the flood hangs the unchanging oracle, "What shall it profit? Be not unequally yoked," and you must forward, for behind you hear a voice, which, pointing to that flood, says, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

However, there is one crisis in every history when faith is tried, and when all the courage is needed which can be derived from God's "Go forward."

The sea I speak of we have all to cross. Some try to forget it, and to some, through grace, it has ceased to be formidable, whilst to others still it has a painful fascination. You cannot forget what lies before you, and you have not ceased to fear it; you cannot help going down to the water's brink from time to time, and taking along the strand a pensive meditative stroll, and almost pitying yourself because you must some day pass over. "O thou flood of sorrow! wherefore is it that thou still dost flow betwixt myself and Immanuel's land? Dark waters! I do not like your look. I shudder at the thought that I must one day face round and turn my footsteps towards your tide. I wonder whether there will be a swell on your surface, or a great calm that day. I wonder what all I shall see in your mysterious unreported caverns; and, above all, I wonder if I shall make good my landing on the farther side. I sometimes fear that my faith shall fail." But although it is appointed to all men once to die, we doubt if such rehearsals of a dying hour are needful. We are inclined to think that the best preparation for that Red Sea passage is to follow, on these unflooded plains of life—on the *terra firma* of daily duty, the fiery-cloudy pillar. In order to lose the dread of death, do you learn to place confidence in Christ? learn to think of Him trustfully and affectionately now, for, as the Angel of God's presence,

as the very soul of the Bible, as the bright eye ever-beaming from the cloud of witnesses, the expressed mind of Christ is ever with you in the volume of the Book; His power and love are around your path in His ubiquitous never-absent Godhead. Depend upon it, if thus in frequent recollection and daily prayer you press up into Christ's friendship, these remoter anxieties will dwindle or disappear. That same Saviour of whose mediation you feel the need when you bend the knee to confess your sin and ask forgiveness, will not be more remote when you bow the head and give up the ghost, and with as little sense of effort then as now He will tell you, "I am the way: no man cometh to the Father but by me." This is the way, walk in it. And although it is already the once-dreaded passage, you will hardly be aware, for to you it is as much dry land as ever, although on either side "the waters great do swell up to the brim;" and although from the verge tearful eyes follow you as you pass down into the dim and mysterious valley, these waters shall not overwhelm your soul, and you will only know that it is the Red Sea you have crossed by seeing no more of your old enemies, temptations, infirmities, and strongly besetting sins. Those Egyptians whom you see to-day, take a good look of them, for after that you will see them no more for ever.

At which rate it is no tame application of the text, it is no degradation of the Divine watchword,

if, on this thanksgiving Sabbath after the Communion, we pass it round as our motto, and say to one another, Go forward! Go forward in faith and holiness, in activity and zeal; go forward in brotherly kindness and charity, in devotion and self-denial; go forward in the self-knowledge which destroys confidence in the flesh; go forward in the courage which waxes strong in Christ Jesus; go forward in the humility which, conscious of unworthiness, still high-hearted and hopeful, seeks the things above; and forward in that seriousness which, taking truer views of life and its outgoings, has also joys and consolations unguessed by carnal levity. Go forward! for in the van are the bravest and the best; go forward, for the guiding pillar is far before, so far before that the Bible is sometimes like to get out of our sight altogether; go forward, for the Forerunner has passed ahead, and they are the happiest pilgrims who so far can overtake as to pursue their course "looking unto Jesus." Go forward! for the best accommodations and refreshments await those who are farthest in advance; and "from strength still onward unto strength," their burdens are the lightest and their difficulties the fewest, who, "forgetting the things that are behind," evermore "press forward,"—forward on the way where the guiding pillar precedes, "to the prize of our high calling," even the place which Christ has prepared.

XIII.

Marah.

"Moses cried unto the LORD, and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters [of Marah], the waters were made sweet."—Ex. xv. 25.

THE Red Sea is crossed, the Egyptians are drowned, and that most ancient as well as most magnificent song of triumph has been sung,—a song so sublime that we purposely postpone exposition; in its spirit and its circumstances so sublime that even Revelation offers no other entirely parallel, and its companion and counterpart is only known to those who along with "the Song of Moses the servant of God" sing also "the Song of the Lamb."

It was a great deliverance, and the people felt it deeply. Perhaps there never was a gush of purer gratitude than poured from the lips of all that million as Miriam's timbrel led the dance; and as one after another the swell bore helpless to their feet the steed in gorgeous housings or his stiff and stalwart master, the exultation leaped up anew, and the shout, "Sing to the Lord, for he hath triumphed

gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." They were a people near to God. They felt as if they were entirely in His hand,—the people whom He had purchased, and whom He designed to plant in the mountain of His holiness. And if it could have been put to them, "After this will you ever doubt God's power or providence?—will you ever wish that you had another God or were your own masters?"—they would have replied in one unanimous outburst, "The Lord is my strength and my salvation: He is my God, and shall reign for ever and ever."

But a little week is hardly past, they have only gone three days into the desert when the Red Sea minstrels are changed into mutineers and murmurers; and as soon as their first grievance is remedied they find a new hardship and a fresh occasion for despair, and for charging God and His servant foolishly. It is no longer, "The Lord is my strength," but "What shall we drink?" It is no longer, "Thou, Lord, in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed," but "Would God we had died when we sat by the flesh-pots! for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill us with hunger."

At first sight this looks fearfully ungrateful and monstrously fickle, and we are apt to praise ourselves obliquely,—we are apt to get up a little sly

self-complacency by bearing hard on the perversity of Israel. But if we would judge righteous judgment, we must advert to the actual facts of the case.

To begin with, was there not a real hardship? Few of us can enter into it, for few of us in health have gone without food for so much as four-and-twenty hours together, and the sensation we call thirst is no more like the mad and raging fever of the desert than our cool and verdant plains are like the baked and blistering rocks of that burning wilderness. This was their predicament. After marching three days through dust and fiery drought they came on wells clear and limpid-looking; but the moment they put the water to their lips it was poison. What wonder if they uttered a great cry of disappointment and horror! After a month's absence from Egypt they were no nearer the land of their hope than when they first set forth, and to aggravate the trial their provisions were spent. The supplies which seemed so ample on the 15th of Abib were exhausted by the 15th of Zif; and was it no hardship to be obliged to slaughter the flocks and herds with which they had intended to stock their expected farms?—was it no hardship to feel their own strength decaying, and to see their children coming round them with sunken eyes and hollow cheeks, and crying for that bread which they no longer had to give?

It is easy to swim on dry land; it is easy to be a Samson as long as the Philistines are only phantoms in the air; but "judge not that ye be not judged." Have you ever tried to go through your daily task with a throbbing, bursting brain, or even with an aching tooth? Have you tried against all-comers to keep your temper? When worn with successive nights of wakefulness or watching, have you tried to stay your soul on God, and hold forth a sunny face all day? Or, when the balance hung betwixt a loved one's life and death, have you tried to say, "Thy will be done?" If so, you will judge in the spirit of meekness even the poor mourning Israelites, lest thou also be tempted.

Another consideration is, they were new to it. True, their life in Egypt was hard enough; but it was not the best preparative for this kind of experience. As slaves, they were abject, resourceless, spiritless; they had no long look forward; they lived within the day. If the flesh-pot was full they had no further wants, because no higher hopes, or at least they found it better to have none. And you know very well the worth of a mainspring, the value of some motive sufficiently persistent and powerful. Hence it is that, accustomed to refined society and elevated pursuits, a Park or a Clapperton does not grudge to spend years in dreary wastes and among treacherous savages, for the solution of

scientific problems and the extension of the bounds of knowledge, is the hope set before him; hence it is that, in the heroism of humanity, a Kane or a M'Clintock braves the rigours of a hyperborean winter, and, sustained by the hope of bringing succour to those that are ready to perish, takes joyfully the blast which, without this hope, would freeze within the bones the marrow; hence it is that, in the dreary trench, amidst the drifting snow, the high-bred noble and the peasant soldier alike bear up, remembering that God and England expect from them their duty; and hence it is that an Eliot, a Zinzendorf, a Judson, constrained by the love of Christ, and striving to speed the day when His saving name shall be everywhere renowned, can face without a fear the heathen clamouring for their blood, and can sing psalms in the death-prison.

But although the Hebrews had a hope set before them, it was new to them, and they had not learned to live upon it. Although they had found a God, even He was new to them, and they could only trust Him when His eye was visibly upon them, and His arm sensibly around them. Rescued at a rush, carried through the Red Sea in a mass, all saved at the self-same moment, they were a nation born in one night; and whilst this made them so far the more signal trophies of God's goodness, it also conspired with outward influences to give to their moods of mind a

peculiar sympathy or simultaneousness. They were twins a million times repeated, and in the close contiguity of their camp their feelings flowed and ebbed together; and although a Caleb or a Joshua, or some rare spirit, might retain his steadfastness, it was difficult to resist the contagious ardour or depression, and the narrative proceeds as if all murmured or rejoiced together. "The people murmured," "the children of Israel murmured," "the whole congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron."

There is another remark which we would here interpose, and it applies to several of the miracles here recorded. A frequent attempt has been made to reduce them to incidents, which, although surprising, were not supernatural. For instance: there is still found in the midsummer months in that peninsula of Sinai a substance now called manna. It is a sweet, gummy exudation from the Alhagi, the tarfah or tamarisk, and other plants, produced by the puncture of an insect; and it is either scraped from the leaves, or gathered up where its drops have trickled down to the ground; and many travellers and interpreters have pronounced this to be the manna or "bread from heaven" on which the Israelites subsisted for forty years in the desert. If so, the miracle is not much diminished, for the entire crop of tree-manna in the Sinai peninsula amounts only to six or seven hundred pounds weight

each year, which to the Israelites would have been at the rate of the hundredth part of a grain to each person per day. But the tree-manna has none of the properties mentioned by Moses except the size and the sweetness. It is not perennial. It is not found at all seasons, but is restricted to the midsummer months; and far from being available for forty years successive, there are years when there is none of it. It does not on the sixth day exude in double quantity, and entirely intermit on the seventh, and far from having any propensity to putrefy, if kept all right, few things keep better. Nor do we suppose that any straightforward unsophisticated reader would draw any other conclusion from the narrative of Moses, and the allusions to that narrative in the Psalms and New Testament, than that it was a miraculous table which was spread for Israel in the desert, and that they were fed in a way unwonted from God's own garner.

At the same time, there is a principle applicable to many miracles on which we would gladly dwell if an occasion like this permitted. Miracles are no violations of the laws of nature—thereby meaning the laws of God—the principles on which the Most High conducts His own procedure. Although to our experience they are rare and exceptional, they are neither efforts to Omnipotence, nor are they episodes and interruptions in the scheme of the

unchanging I AM. They are the evolutions of a higher law, which for the moment seems to set aside or supersede the common law, the ordinary course of Providence; but, as we might expect from their majestic Author, these miracles are no mere whimsies or vagaries, no monstrous portents or idle prodigies such as Eastern imagination has delighted to invent, but the signs and wonders of One who is wise in counsel and excellent in working—signs which in a moment transport us into the presence-chamber of Omnipotence, but wonders which are wonderfully marked by the same wisdom, goodness, holiness, of which we have examples in His familiar well-known ongoings.

Hence in many miracles we are not surprised to find the reappearance on a scale of sudden expansion or enlargement of facts or principles with which we have long been conversant. The letters are on a gigantic scale, or as they run along the wall they float and flicker with a dazzling light; and yet in a moment we recognise the self-same handwriting,—the autograph inimitable, unmistakable, which we have all along beheld growing in the grass or projecting its revelations on pages of the Bible.

In virtue of this Divine self-consistency there is often what we would call a *natural* element in the most supernatural interposition; and so far from lessening the value of the miracle, does it not

impart to it new beauty and significance? Not to say that there is no waste of the wonderful, is it not worthy of the Most High that by accelerating His own processes, or making new uses of His own creatures, He should exhibit effects which in any hand but His, these processes, these creatures, would be powerless to display? and in that boundless diversity which marks His manifestations, whether ordinary or extraordinary, who shall say which is the most Divine, the miracle where the whole springs forth direct, startling and stupendous, from a simple fiat; or the other, where there exists a germ already in some familiar phenomenon,—a phenomenon, however, which by virtue coming forth from God suddenly expands into dimensions confessedly Divine? Was it not a miracle, when to the whelming billows Jesus said, "Peace, be still!" and by that word, creating an instant calm, He saved the drowning mariners? But when just at the moment an angry king was about to grasp the fugitives,—when just at that moment God made an east wind to blow, and split a passage through the flood, walling it up on either hand, was there nothing supernatural in the opportuneness of the breeze, nothing supernatural in its unprecedented power? When to the barren fig-tree Jesus said, "Henceforth no fruit grow on thee for ever," no hail-storm fell, no caterpillar came, but feeling at

its heart the awful word, instantly withered away, the conscious cumber-ground. But is it less than supernatural and divine when to the tyrant it is said, "Let my people go, or to-morrow about this time expect a grievous hail," and to-morrow at that time the icy shrapnell—the hurtling hail-shower —pounds into the earth the sprouting corn, and shatters every tree? That hail, is it not the hand of God? that east wind, is it not His breath? and in wielding either at the moment, and for the special end, was there not the same omnipotence as went forth in the word, the mere *will expressed* of Jesus?

Coming to the case in hand, we are extremely interested to learn that a pearly-looking substance, suggestive of honey, is still found in that Arabian wilderness; for although it cannot account for the miracle, it accounts for the key-note on which that miracle was pitched. Now that He was about to feed His famished children with supplies straight from His own storehouse, the Most High selected a substance congruous to the place and in keeping with their circumstances. In the bare and burning desert He did not cause to spring such rice-crops as they had left in the deep inundated soil of Egypt, nor did He perplex them by raining all around them what they would not have understood,—the ready-made loaves, the bread-fruits of the then unknown Southern Isles; but selecting a palatable

product of the place, or a substance near akin, to these pensioners at Heaven's gate, the Great Almoner gave what was none the less Heaven's bread, because a sample somewhat like it was indigenous,—all the more truly Heaven's bread, because the existence of that other showed how well adapted it was for desert pilgrims. And just as the Lord Jesus, when about to feed five thousand hungry guests, as He did not fling away the five loaves which were actually forthcoming, but used them as the starting-point or key-note of His miracle, multiplying them a thousandfold, —so when about to feed His million guests for forty years, Jehovah did not ignore the handful of meal already in the barrel, the few drops which already trickled from the tarfah-trees, but multiplying the supply a hundred-thousandfold; instead of a mere taste of honey-dew; instead of a few tiny and tantalizing particles, with Divine profusion He emptied a whole garner over them every night, and scattered it round their tents thick as snow on Salmon.

These little links are valuable. Rightly regarded they do not make the supernatural less wonderful, but they make it more instructive and more interesting. They afford a revelation of God's character whilst letting forth a coruscation of His power; and they are gentle inclines by which from the level of every day we may ascend towards the throne of an

ever-wakeful, ever-working Omnipotence,—gangways or bridges by which our feeble steps may cross over from the frail barque of our own existence—circumscribed, mist-bounded—to the ever-adjacent mainland of the infinite and the eternal.

This principle we have little hesitation in extending to Marah and the sweetening of its waters. It is quite true, as Professor Johnston and others have shown, that some kinds of water, brackish or bitter, may be rendered drinkable by steeping in them certain woods or berries; and there is a legend that the waters of China were so bad that the people could not drink till a certain sage pointed out a little tree whose well-known leaves many of us consider an improvement to even the best of water. But we cannot help feeling that in a context like this we must rise higher than any such rationalistic rendering of the incident; for even if any plant efficacious for such purposes had grown in the region—as several recent travellers strenuously deny,—its virtues were unknown to Moses till the Lord revealed them, and even after that they must have been singularly enhanced in order to supply to such a multitude a pure and potable beverage. "The Lord showed unto Moses a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet;" and the supernatural character of the occurrence comes out more strikingly in that

standing promise, that "statute and ordinance" by which it was followed: "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee." As much as to say, "My dealings with Israel shall be the converse of My dealings with Egypt. They were resistful and rebellious, and I sent them punishments and plagues: but if you be diligent and docile, I will heal and comfort you. And accept the earnest: behold the sign. As my wonders in the field of Zoan began by turning into blood the delicious waters of the Nile, so my wonders in the wilderness begin by turning into sweetness the bitter springs of Marah. Jehovah Rophi: I am the Lord who healeth you.

Surely there was a lesson which, running to these waters, Israel read, and which it would be a pity if it were lost on us.

In itself water is one of the best of things. Pure, cool, pellucid, it is the good gift of God,—a cup of cold water the very emblem of unmingled blessing. And as it comes from heaven, it is always clear and uncontaminated; it is only in earth's reservoirs that it sometimes gets muddied, and sometimes even

poisoned. There are salts of copper in the soil through which the current percolates; the manchineel has shed its deadly fruits into the fountain, or an enemy has passed this way and drugged the wells.

Books, leisure, learning, friends, and children,—wealth, accommodations,—the beautiful in nature, the exquisite in art, are all the gift of God, and as they come from God they are all pure and unalloyed: If the cup which catches the morning dew itself were clear as crystal,—if the pool that receives the rain had nothing miry or deleterious in it, good and pure would the gifts remain. But alas! too often it is a bad and bitter soil,—a proud and selfish spirit, a morose and murmuring heart, a godless, and so a hopeless, joyless mind, into which the mercy comes, and when the moment arrives that the happy possessor should drink and be refreshed, he turns away disgusted. "What's the matter with the well? It looks clear enough. What's the matter with the man? He has a good house, an ample income, a fine family; but the curl of contempt, the wrinkles of unrest on his countenance, the 'vanitas vanitatum' in his tones, proclaim dissatisfaction and discontent. What's the matter? Don't you know? The water was good enough till once it came there: but here the soil is Marah. It is the bitter soil that makes the bitter fountain; and you must give

the man a better heart,—more humble, more thankful, more genial, more devout,—in order that he may get the full enjoyment of the good and perfect gifts which God bestows." It must, however, be admitted that besides the Marah within there are bitter fountains to which God in His providence sometimes conducts His people. That is to say, in their way to the better country, God sometimes sends His people trials where they looked for blessings. A child dearly loved and doated upon is taken away. Another is spared to turn out neither a credit nor a comfort. A beloved relative is laid aside by lingering sickness, or is banished to the ends of the earth, or is still more mournfully secluded from your society by the great gulf of an imagined wrong, a wounded spirit, or a mind diseased. Or after a toilsome tramp through the desert you have attained the oasis: you have made your modest competence, and in this rosy little hermitage you hope to spend life's evening quietly and not uselessly, when, lo and behold! your sight is failing, or the power of locomotion is withdrawn, or some incipient malady gives warning that to suffer will henceforth be a main part of your vocation.

What ever shall you do? Whom shall you imitate? the multitude or Moses? Moses was as much disappointed as the people, for he was as

parched and faint as they; but whilst they murmured, he cried to God. And so, if wise, will you. Cry to God. There is a remedy! There is that at hand which, if you knew it, would make all right again, and the Lord can easily show you what it is. Perhaps he may bid you move forward another stage, for at Elim there are palm-trees and pure water in plenty. But most likely He will put you on a plan for sweetening those mercies which are for the present embittered. His name is the Lord the Healer. If you be diligent and docile, if you hearken to His voice, and do that which is right in His sight, He will make all things work together for your good; and by the tender sympathy He raises up, by the timely help He sends, by the gentle sustaining of His own spirit inwardly, He can work such a change on Marah that where once you stood aghast in horrible surprise, you can now stoop down and as you drink abundantly shall wonder to find that it is no longer bitter.

"For there's a wonder-working wood,
I've heard believers say,
Can make these bitter waters good
And take the curse away.

The Cross on which the Saviour died
And conquer'd for His saints,
This is the tree, by faith applied,
Which sweetens all complaints.

Thousands have found the bless'd effect,
  Nor longer mourn their lot ;
While on His sorrows they reflect
  Their own are all forgot.

When they by faith behold the cross,
  Though many griefs they meet,
They draw a gain from every loss
  And find the bitter sweet."

XIV.

Murmurs.

"And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt: and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings *are* not against us, but against the LORD."—Ex. xvi. 6-8.

MURMURING! It must have been a malady characteristic of the Hebrew people, or a disease peculiar to that desert. As we proceed with this narrative we are constantly meeting it, creaking along in discord harsh and chronic, or amazing earth and heaven by its shrill, ear-piercing paroxysms. They lift up their eyes, and as the Egyptians pursue, the people murmur. They come to a fountain, the water is bitter, and once more they murmur. Then there is no water at all, and of course they murmur. Then no bread, murmurings renewed. Next bread without flesh; murmurings redoubled. Moses is long in the Mount;

murmurs. He takes too much upon him; more murmurs. When shall we reach that promised land?—murmurs extraordinary, loud murmurs. We are close to the land, but its inhabitants are giants, and their towns walled up to heaven. Oh, what a take-in! and the last breath of the last survivors of that querulous race goes forth in a hurricane of reproach and remonstrance—a perfect storm of murmurs.

What a good thing that the race is exterminated! Was it not fortunate that all their carcases fell in the wilderness? Would it not have been a great pity if any of that root of bitterness had found its way into the goodly land, so as to infest with its cleaving burrs and envenomed spines the pleasant fields of Palestine?

But are you sure? This weed so noxious, has it really gone into the fossil flora?—this vice so hateful, is it utterly extinct and only known amongst the crimes of history? Then why last week, "What a pity that I am not beautiful! Why did not God give me a fine voice or handsome features—something that would have made me be followed after and admired?" Why yesterday, "Is that a dinner for a Christian?" [Under one cover there was nothing but manna, and the other was only quails.] Why this morning such fuss and fury because a chimney smoked, or because in some

well-meant arrangement of your papers a tract had been mislaid which you wished to read? Why that monotone of peevishness, discontent, fault-finding which runs through the lives of many, and which, if noticed, unhinges and makes unhappy those around them, and which, if no notice be taken of it, renders their own rage still fiercer? You call it climate, weather, a flaw in the peptic processes, the Englishman's privilege of grumbling. But we fear that if the truth were known, it would turn out an old disease with a new name. It does not need much Hebrew to ascertain that it is nothing more nor less than MURMURINGS.

But what's the harm of it? Why, this harm: God was good to Israel. He had done for them what He never did for any nation. He had chosen them for Himself as His peculiar treasure. Stooping down upon them, He had snatched them from chains and tyranny, and at that very instant, as on eagle's wings, was bearing them to a good land and a large. And they should have been thankful and trustful, and remembering that they were in the arms of Omnipotence—those arms which had snatched them from under the scythed chariots of Pharaoh, and which, flying over the Red Sea billows, did not let them drop into its weltering waters,—would it have been too much if, in any emergency, they had calmly stood still to see God's

salvation, and if in their daily march they had made the passes re-echo with their songs of rejoicing? God was good to Israel, and, as praise is comely, He would have delighted in aught that betokened consciousness of His benefits and trust in His care. Instead of this they soon forgot His mighty works, and from over the graves of these grumblers the Lord proclaims to His people in all time, "Harden not your hearts as in the provocation, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works. Forty years long was I grieved with that generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways. Unto whom I sware in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest."[1]

Am I wrong in surmising that this is peculiarly a sin of God's people? not that they are more apt than others to indulge in complaints and despondency; but do they not tolerate in themselves a peevish, foreboding, murmuring spirit to a degree to which they would be terrified to indulge almost any other sin?

And is it not wicked? Are you not under the cloud—the guiding pillar? Have you not the hope that God for Christ's sake will take you to heaven? Have you not been baptized into Christ? Do you

[1] Ps. xcv. 8-11. See also 1 Cor. x. 1-12.

not profess to be His disciples, and in Him have you not often found as often as you sought it refreshment for your soul—spiritual meat and spiritual drink? And should not the thought of your high distinction fill you with habitual gratitude, and so with habitual happiness?

And is it not unwise? This creating of your own crosses, this embittering of your own mercies, this chiding with your lot, this quarrelling with the Most High, this falling-out with fellow-pilgrims, is it not foolish and unwise? What advantageth it you that God is good, if you neglect His gifts or push them from you? What the better will you be of the Saviour's grace and power, if you cannot trust Him? What the better are you of all the blessings which God sends you in providence and in the gospel, if you won't allow that they are meant for you—if instead of closing over them the warm and thankful hand of faith, you nibble at them with the long metallic pincers of a technical theology—if, instead of taking home that great cargo of blessings which Christ sends you in His word, and living on them day by day, you leave them miles off in the bonded warehouse of your creed?

Oh, my friends, far be from us the heartlessness which would make light of real afflictions, or which would speak as if there were no such thing

as pain and sorrow. But the sorest sufferers are seldom the loudest complainers, and by bringing God near, a real affliction usually drives murmurs far away. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because *Thou* didst it." "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee. Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." We have seldom found a true mourner who murmured. The struggle might be hard but the strength was imparted, and we have so often seen the peace which passeth understanding keeping the heart from which a great joy had departed, that—like the blind man when asked, "What shall we do to make this man happy?" and who answered, "Put out his eyes"—we have sometimes felt that for causeless complaints and fanciful grievances there is a remedy real though dreadful in an actual bereavement. And this suggests that the true relief under little and every-day trials must be found where we seek for support under great tribulations.

And what is that? Like the Israelites we have our Shekinah—our cloud of glory and of guidance in which God hath put His Name,—only more articulate and nearer hand, in the Volume of the Book. The very sight of it should be reassuring. In its

mere presence there is a source of hope; in its great and precious promises there is everlasting consolation.

But when we consult it more particularly, we find that to bring our own spirits into the right state, they need to be under the direct influence of God's Spirit. How it is that He reaches our minds and works upon them we hardly know, but that He can do it we are told, and that if sincerely asked He will. If we are selfish, He is benevolent; if we have faint love to Christ, He loves Him and delights to glorify Him; if we are slow to believe, He is the author of faith and can make us trustful; if we are complainers, He is the comforter. And if we being evil know to give good gifts to our children, our heavenly Father will give His Holy Spirit to them who ask Him.

And let us remember our mercies. If you had seen the chosen people on the Red Sea shore,—with that returnless rubicon between themselves and the house of bondage, and their persecutors still as a stone beneath its molten sepulchre,—you would have said, "O Israel, who is like unto thee, a people saved of the Lord? The deliverance of this day will never depart from your memory, and all the rest of your pilgrimage you will continue singing to the Lord who hath triumphed so gloriously." And yet one little week destroyed the tune, and changed

hosannahs into murmurs. And we shall much mistake if we imagine that any single mercy, however surpassing, can of itself awaken life-long thankfulness or even secure habitual happiness. I have known people surprised into enormous fortunes, and after the first rapture was over they relapsed into their wonted sullenness, and wandered about amidst their wealth with the old verjuice in their tempers and the old scowl on their faces. And I have seen men rejoicing on the Red Sea shore,—tears in their eyes and rapture in their looks,—because they had escaped from Satan's bondage, and feeling as if they could never lose this blessedness; and even these I have lived to see dwindle down into "murmurers, complainers, and spots in the feast of charity." And this mainly because they had forgotten God their Saviour, and the wondrous things He had done for them.[1] And whilst this confirms what we have already said,—that in order to keep up the memory of a mercy we need a Remembrancer, one constant as is God Himself, and who can come near our spirits as God's Spirit can; it also shows that we ought to stir up our own minds by way of remembrance. That great deliverance,—the salvation wrought by Christ, and Christ Himself. Sabbaths are invaluable mementos, and so are sacraments, and all high and hallowed seasons. But over and

[1] Ps. cvi. 21, 22.

above we must put forth an active effort. We must stir up our minds, we must look back, and look around, and try to revive the feeling with which first we stood on our Red Sea shore, and shouted, "The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation."

Then, suppose we try to invert the process. We are ingenious in finding out *desiderata:* it may not be the best Latin, but it would be an excellent habit if we tried to find out the *suppeditata,*—the wants that have been supplied and the blessings that have been sent even without our asking. A mighty inventory :—The Saviour—The Word of God—The hope of glory—The pardon of sin—Eternal life, even now begun—The Holy Spirit—Our British birthright—Our nineteenth century—These books—These friends—This family circle still in sight—And other members in Heaven—This morning's meal.

XV.

The Decalogue.[1]

"And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me," etc.—EXODUS xx. 1-17.

IF it takes some time to learn, it also takes some time to forget. Before he fell away from God's friendship, man had enjoyed a wonderful intimacy with his Creator; and as the Lord God used to talk with Adam in the cool of the day, we can easily believe that our first father made attainments in Divine knowledge such as have been vouchsafed to none of his descendants. And setting out of sight those perfections of the Godhead which he had no occasion to know, if asked to name the greatest theologian who has ever lived, we doubt if we should name Calvin or Aquinas,—nay, if we should name even Paul or Moses. For clear and unclouded knowledge, for child-like and familiar intimacy, we are apt to think that no one has yet come near the student and worshipper of Eden: we fancy that

[1] Preached before the British Society for the Evangelisation of the Jews.

before his fall Adam knew by intuition, and as the result of affectionate intercourse with Heaven, a great deal which his descendants have not yet been able to recover.

And what he thus learned we have no reason to suppose that he ever afterwards forgot. The Fall banished him from Paradise, but it did not annihilate his memory; and he lived on for nearly a thousand years thereafter, we have every reason to believe, a penitent and a preacher of righteousness. He lived on—that old-world's Bible—able to tell all that he had learned in the days of innocence, with the addition of that Gospel which had been revealed to him on the day of his mournful exile; and to every conscience-stricken Lamech, to every guileless God-fearing Abel, to every devout and heavenly-minded Enoch throughout successive centuries, he could repeat the things which he had heard and seen, nor need any have felt helplessly benighted who could inquire at such an oracle.

And long after our first father fell asleep, the light still lingered. It was no scanty nor corrupt creed which issued from the Ark, and well had it been for the world had the morning spread upon Mount Ararat gone on, and brightened into perfect day. But it soon began to fade. Men did not like to retain the true God in their knowledge, and it was not long before darkness covered all the earth,

and gross darkness every people. Idolatry was all but universal, and no less universal were the accompanying immoralities and crimes.

At this conjuncture, to save the scanty relics of primeval truth, and to receive and preserve further revelations, the Lord took this method. Water spilt upon the ground cannot be gathered up again. It sinks into the soil. There were tons of it yesterday, but if you go out to fill your pitcher to-day, it all is gone. If you want to preserve the precious element you must prepare a tank or reservoir. You dig a pool, and to prevent it from leaking you line the sides with concrete or with marble closely fitting; and if carefully covered over or buried in the cool heart of the mountain, in such a storehouse it may be kept for years. Exotic flowers or foreign plants, if seeded on the mountain-side or inserted in the meadow amongst the promiscuous herbage growing there, soon get choked and disappear. If you wish to transmit from season to season, or from age to age, the flaming glories of the Cape or the rich fruits of the tropic, you must provide a garden enclosed—you must keep out the weeds and the ruffian weather. And so to preserve truths and lessons for which there was no predisposition in a fallen world,—from which there was rather an aversion in the mind of the promiscuous multitude, the Lord "took in a little piece of holy ground." He fenced in the

Hebrew nationality, and fitted it for receiving His successive revelations. Within the enclosure of their mountains and the desert surrounding, and within the enclosure still more effectual of their peculiar institutions, He secluded them and walled them in, and made them His own conservatory,—a conservatory where such truths as the unity and spirituality of God, mediation, atonement for sin, the promise of Messiah, should survive uninjured, and where should flourish institutions so humane and so holy as the Sabbath and the synagogue, sacrifice and a provision for the poor. The water of life was in danger of being lost if it rained indiscriminate on a besotted world; and so the Most High prepared a reservoir. He dug it deep and lined it carefully. By terrible punishments He weaned the nation from idolatry, and by laws defining their very food, He made them a peculiar people. That ritual was the asphalt or cement with which He lined the reservoir, and then, to make assurance doubly sure, into the inner tank, the iron cistern of a written record pouring the full flood of saving knowledge, He provided for the thirst of all ages, He provided so that in all the coming centuries when the poor and needy cried unto the Lord, they should be able with joy to draw water from the wells of salvation.

As the Lord said to Israel (Ex. xix. 5), "If ye

will obey my voice and keep my covenant, ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people: ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation:" a sacred community, a sacerdotal society, a kingdom of priests. And as "the priest's lips should keep knowledge," it was to be Israel's function to receive and preserve the lively oracles;—they were to be in an attitude evermore to learn God's will, and they were to be careful to maintain in the midst of a forgetful world His worship and His way.

In connexion with the Life and Times of Moses we have so far traced the process by which the Most High prepared the peculiar people. Amidst bondage and abuse we have seen the chosen family grow into a mighty multitude; and now, rescued by the outstretched arm of Jehovah, torn from the grasp of Pharaoh, and sped through the trough of the sundered sea, we find that rescued multitude beginning to realize its distinct and independent nationality. Fifty days have passed since that night so memorable when the fiery pillar gave the sign and showed the path to the marching million, and now conducted into the very depths of the desert, and prepared by such miracles as the manna and the smitten rock, the people were ready to receive the first, and, in its accompaniments, the most stupendous of all the revelations.

No scene could be more suitable. Enclasped between the two arms of the Erythrean Gulf is that enormous labyrinth of dry valleys and desolate mountains into the midst of which the wanderers now had penetrated,—a region new to them, but not unknown to their leader, for in that same Horeb he had fed the flock of Jethro, and there at the burning bush he had received his great commission. And we can easily imagine what a strange and solemn region it would be to Israel,—come away from the Nile, broad and overbrimming, to these ravines, down which nothing flowed but rivers of hot air; from the loud streets and stirring lanes of Goshen and Memphis to that listening silence which seemed to await the voice of the Eternal, and those lofty peaks which, relieved by no verdure, and interrupted by no life, carried the eye that rested on them straight up to heaven. If it be the perfection of a place of worship to have nothing to distract the mind, there could be nothing more stern and still than this inland solitude, with its granite pinnacles soaring up nine thousand feet into the firmament, —an Alpine skeleton, a Tyrol or Savoy, with its forests and its snows torn off and its lakes dried up, —the ruins of a world.

So awful was the sanctuary, so sublime the pulpit to which Jehovah led His people, that they might hear His memorable sermon and receive the statute-

book of heaven. After two days of solemn preparation, the third morning dawned, and Sinai was lost in clouds, and as from around the dark pavilion the flame-like ministers went out and in, and an aërial trumpet mingled with the crashing thunder, the voice began, "I am the LORD thy God who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" and proceeded till all the emphatic words were spoken, which, afterwards graven on stone by God's own finger, are still recognised by Christian, Jew, and Moslem as the basis of all religion and all morals—the great standard of right and wrong,—the Ten Commandments. On this code we have but a few remarks to offer.

1. The Decalogue is unique. God gave to the Israelites many other statutes and ordinances, but these others He gave by the hand of the lawgiver—silently and in personal communion imparted them to Moses, and by Moses they were conveyed to the people. But when the ten commandments were spoken, Moses himself was on the plain and on a level with the rest of the congregation. And although they were afterwards consigned to stone tablets, so terrible was the voice of the Eternal—so like to dissolve their quaking frames as thrill after thrill it cut and hewed the fleshly tables of their hearts—that they said to Moses, "Speak thou with

us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." Both as spoken by God's own voice, and as written on the rock by God's own finger, these commands stand forth alone—their supreme importance sufficiently betokened by their prominence in the forefront of all the rest, and by their promulgation so directly and entirely Divine.

2. Then the Decalogue is marked by wonderful simplicity and brevity. The second, third, and fourth commandments go into some detail, but like the rest each of them can easily be condensed into a single sentence; so that they will merit the old Talmudic name, The Ten Words,—Words so plain that he who runs may read, so portable that he who forgets everything besides may easily remember them; and thus a wonderful contrast to our human legislation—to our British statute-book, for instance, which it would need an elephant to carry and an Œdipus to interpret, and which is so ingeniously complicated that the most conscientious are continually transgressing it, and rogues are constantly surprised by finding that they have unintentionally fulfilled it.

3. These ten words are as comprehensive as they are brief and authoritative. The first table is religious, and the second is moral. The first table fixes the right object of worship—the one supreme, self-existent Jehovah,—the right mode, direct and with-

out the intervention of images,—the right spirit, reverently and with godly fear. The second or ethical table is the protector of life, of person, of property, of character, and as the rest sufficiently cover the outward conduct, it closes the series with one which reaches the thoughts and intents of the heart,—Thou shalt not covet.

On the several precepts it is impossible to expatiate; but a remark may be useful regarding two or three points.

In the second commandment we have a reason annexed: "Bow not to idols; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth [generation] of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands [of generations] of them that love me." To some this threatening sounds severe and arbitrary; but we fancy that their misgiving arises mainly from a misconception. It is not meant for a moment that the pious son of an idolatrous father shall be punished for his father's idolatry; for in such a case (to use the language of Plutarch[1]) "the punishment destined for the race is cut off by the son passing over from the family of vice to that of virtue." Thus Josiah, the devout son of the idolatrous Amon, was not only exempted from any punishment for his father's sin, but on the

[1] Quoted by Kalisch.

ground of his individual piety the penalty hanging over an idolatrous country was suspended until Josiah should be safe beyond its reach: "Behold, I will bring evil on this place (saith the Lord), because they have forsaken me, and have burnt incense unto other gods; but because *thine own heart* was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, behold, therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers in peace; and thine eyes shall not see the evil which I will bring upon this place."[1] It is only if the third and fourth generations continue haters of God themselves that they will be punished at once for their own sin and the sin of their God-hating or idolatrous ancestor.

This is all that is said, but even if it had said a little more could we not still understand it? Can we alter the constitution of human nature? Dare we complain of the course of Providence? In that constitution is not the parental or transmissive principle so deeply embedded that we shall never get it out? and in the course of that Providence is not good on the one hand and misery on the other continually flowing through this parental channel? And do you not feel justified in continually making appeals of this nature:—"My good friend, if you have no regard for yourself, think of your family. You are living without religion, and at this rate

[1] 2 Kings xxii. 16-20.

your children are likely to grow up reckless and irreligious also; your boy is already mimicking your oaths. Your fierce passions are reappearing in your child. Your tippling will be transmitted, and with it the rags and wretchedness, even unto the third and fourth generation of them who like yourself love liquor and abuse themselves with strong drink. And do not say that it is hard in God to punish the poor innocents. If they are innocents God will not punish them; but it is you who are doubly doing it. Now that they are comparatively innocent, you are punishing them by throwing away your good name—a legacy better than any gold you could have left them; and you are punishing them by squandering their comforts, and you are doing infinitely worse. You are not only a bad father yourself, but by ruining their principles and corrupting their morals you are doing all that you can to deprive them of the fatherhood of God. By making them bad, you are ruining their prospects for either world. Have you no heart? have you no pity for your own? by bringing them up in idolatry, in Sabbath-breaking and dishonesty, will you put them out of the pale of that mercy which is abundant enough for a thousand generations? will you put them within sweep of that law which, when the sin is inherited, sends also the penalty, and thus have your own

crime perpetuated and your iniquity visited in children like-minded to the third and fourth generation?" So that, rightly understood, we can see in the words nothing harsh or unkind. The fifth commandment concludes with a promise,—that second commandment concludes with a warning,—not a mere threatening, but a warning which includes both threatening and promise. "Honour thy parents," says the one, "that thy days may be long." "Be loyal to thy God," says the other, "that it may be well not only with thyself, but with thy children after thee:" and if there be any difference, it is a purer and wider affection—a more extended self-love to which the second commandment addresses its appeal.

A wonderful code! and a wonderful occasion!—

> "The terrors of that awful day, though past,
> Have on the tide of time some glory cast;"[1]

and it is impossible to calculate the impressions and impulses which date from that hour of awe and wonder. As the people witnessed the thunderings and the lightnings and the noise of the trumpet, and listened to the proclamation, "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of Egypt," there remained no doubt in any mind. In every fibre of their frame they felt and knew that Israel's God was present, and all their bones could say, "Who

[1] Joanna Baillie.

is like unto thee, O Lord? Thou art Lord of heaven and earth, and there is none besides." And all infirmities, all idolatrous backslidings notwithstanding, of that great impression neither they nor their children ever rid themselves entirely. A sensation as of Sinai is in the heart of Israel still; and it has been a great thing for the world that through all these three thousand years there has existed in the midst of the nations—amidst pagan polytheism and papal idolatry—a race of monotheists and spiritual worshippers—a race witnessing for the unity and inconceivable majesty of the Most High.

An occasion to which we, my friends, are particularly indebted; for, as an eloquent Israelite has remarked, "The life and property of England are protected by the laws of Sinai. The hard-working people of England are secured a day of rest in every week by the laws of Sinai."[1] And more than that: for all the rest of Revelation, and all the subsequent Hebrew history rotate round Sinai. The heroism of Jewish warriors and the inspiration of Jewish minstrels were equally animated by the first and great command; and as the same writer adds, "As an exponent of the mysteries of the human heart, as a soother of the troubled spirit, to whose harp do the people of England fly for

[1] Disraeli's *Tancred.*

sympathy and solace? Is it to Byron or Wordsworth, or even the myriad-minded Shakespeare? No; the most popular poet in England is the sweet singer of Israel, and by no other race except his own has his odes been so often sung. It was 'the sword of the Lord and of Gideon' that won for England its boasted liberties; and the Scotch achieved their religious freedom, chanting upon their hill-sides the same canticles which cheered the heart of Judah amid their glens."

Thus the commands were given, and thus on adamantine tablets they survived—a standard of righteousness universal and everlasting. But alas! though the Law is holy, man is weak and sinful, and if a perpetual restraint to evil, that law has also been to the most strenuous obedience among the children of men a standing reproof, a perpetual despair. With its concluding prohibition of evil desires, and with that love to God and our neighbour which is confessedly its necessary pervading spirit, no man has ever gone to God and said, "I have kept it all. My case is complete. Are there any more commands, for in thought, word, and deed I have perfectly obeyed the Ten?" But like David, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, in the saintliest men self-knowledge has extorted the confession, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips! My very righteousness is filthy rags. O God, enter not into judgment

with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

So stood the law for fifteen centuries—a monitor, a reprover, a mirror, into which, on the great day of atonement, pride might look and see the grey hairs in its goodness, the blemishes in its best obedience. There it stood for fifteen centuries a challenge to mankind—a sword which none could wield, a trumpet which none could sound, armour which, if any one could wear and walk in it, the gates of heaven would open to him of their own accord.

There it stood, and there it would still be standing, a mere protest and reproach, had not the Lawgiver Himself become the Law-fulfiller. But at last that Son was given to our human family, whose name is Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God! In the guise of our mortality He brought to our extremity the help of Heaven, and going up to the Decalogue and brushing off the dust of ages, He read it all anew. "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law," He said; "I am come not to destroy, but to fulfil." And forthwith He began. To every precept rendering heartfelt homage, He presented withal a complete obedience:—in His own emphatic words, *fulfilling*. Where others read only prohibition, He read requirement, and their negative He relieved and brought up into the positive. "Do no murder," was with Him "Be meek, be merciful, be magnanimous;" and from the time that, in saving lives and healing

sickness, He struck the first note, till, in "Father, forgive them," He breathed forth His spirit, responsive to the sixth command; He sounded the entire diapason, and showed Himself a true law-fulfiller. "Keep holy the Sabbath," was with Him not merely "Sit still and do nothing," but, in order to keep holy the Sabbath, He filled it up with heaven, and by healing broken hearts, by curing life-long lazars, by filling sinful spirits with thoughts benign and beautiful, He secured for the Lord of the Sabbath new love, and for the day itself new sanctity. And so all throughout, till over-against the two tables of requirement arose a life of fulfilment—on the one side a holy law, on the other a holy history—on the one side a precept as perfect as the God from whom it came, on the other side an obedience as perfect as we could wish our own to have been.

And now, brethren of the House of Israel, we have much for which to thank you. To you belong "the giving of the law and the promises." In the hand of God you have been the benefactors of the human family. The substructures of our faith rest upon your Bible. We sing your Psalms; we believe your Prophets; as the rule of our conduct we recite your Ten Commandments. The heaven to which we aspire is the heaven of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. At the same time we frankly confess that we have no hope of reaching it through our own holiness. Do not twit us, as well you may, by saying, "So

much the better for you, because you have none." If it come to that, may it not go hard with the strictest Jew? Another scene awaits us more awful than even that morning at Sinai, and as, before God's nearing sanctity, dust and ashes feel like to die, the least sinful might be thankful to say to some Moses, "Speak thou for us," and might give the world for some passport to heaven other than his personal purity.

Such a passport we who are Christians believe that we have found, and for it we own ourselves indebted to One who was not the less a member of your nation, because we believe Him to have been a great deal more. According to our view, Messiah has not only offered a sacrifice for sins, but He has magnified the law and made it honourable. As the representative of His people, and on their behalf, He has fulfilled all righteousness, and with that righteousness His Divine Father is well pleased. We owe much to Moses, but we owe more to Messiah. Moses handed down from God to your fathers a law right but rigid, and said, Do this and live; but Messiah handed up to God, on behalf of His people, a perfect obedience, and from God He hands down to His people in return a pardon all complete, and says, Take this and live. Moses led your fathers to the fenced and flaming skirts of Sinai, but Messiah leads us to the feet of His Father and our Father, and teaches us to say, "Our Father who art in heaven." Such

happiness as we have we owe it all to One whom, according to the flesh, we owe to you. By a singular combination of circumstances, the most of you have been led to repudiate His claims, although to our minds He is the glory of Israel, and that all-important Personage, for the sake of whom your nation has received and still maintains its mysterious and unprecedented existence. But, forgive me for saying it, you are wrong; your position is a false one; for the facts of history and the facts of consciousness are both against you. We respectfully urge you to examine for yourselves, and as the result of candid inquiry we can only anticipate one conclusion. From that conclusion your minds at this moment revolt; but if it should prove, as we predict, you will eventually wonder at your own repugnance. And amongst other results, besides making the Bible a book true, beautiful, and significant beyond all that it has ever been before, one happy effect will be to give the Decalogue a look no longer threatening and penal, but friendly and propitious. Finding in the Lawgiver the Law-fulfiller, the commandment will acquire a new character, and you will find accomplished that promise of the Lord by Ezekiel, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

XVI.

The Law and its Fulfiller.

"And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep and do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, (I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to shew you the word of the LORD: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount,) saying," etc.—DEUT. v. 1-21.

SUCH are the Ten Commandments. Such is that great code of religion and morals on which the legislation of Great Britain is founded, and which pervades the jurisprudence of Christendom. In many sanctuaries it is read over every week, and to each precept the worshipper responds with the prayer, "Lord, incline our hearts to keep this law;" and even where it is not written on the wall or recited from the altar, few are the memories to which it is not familiar. Indeed, so omnipresent is it now in the life, the ideas, and the language of our country, that the difficulty is great to throw ourselves away from it even in thought, so as to mark its features

and admire its symmetry. We cannot imagine a world without it, and so we can hardly estimate the service which has been rendered by its promulgation, not that its details were new even at Mount Sinai, but that then and there the rules of eternal righteousness, which had been lying about the world—tossed along from age to age, vague, amorphous, and unauthoritative—were handed forth from heaven anew, and, clear beyond cavil, sufficiently compact for the smallest memory, and comprehensible by the feeblest understanding, became to mankind a statute-book for ever—a statute-book direct from the presence of Infinite Majesty, and in the solemnities by which it was sanctioned, suggestive of that awful tribunal when it will reappear as the law by which the righteous Judge shall render to every man according to his deeds.

1. The Decalogue is the first statute-book which has abolished idolatry and polytheism. "No God but me," says the first commandment; "No likeness or image," says the second; and in thus learning the unity and spirituality of the Divine nature, Israel was at once put in advance of the rest of the world by at least fifteen hundred years. In the most important of all knowledge, the little Samuel who could repeat these two commands was wiser than Socrates or Cicero adoring a statue. He was wiser than Homer, or Hesiod with his lords many and

gods many; he was wiser than Confucius, or Lucretius without a god at all.

2. Another peculiarity of this statute-book is its consecration of one day in seven to the service of Jehovah. The temple was a sacred place, and in the middle ages it was usual to claim for churches the right of sanctuary, so that whosoever took refuge within the hallowed precincts was safe from the avenger. But it is not to a holy place but to a holy day that God has given this protecting privilege. Addressing a world to which He had said, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread," and addressing a community in which there was a great deal of forced labour, many bondmen and many bondmaids, the purport of it was—"Yes, labour. You require labour from your servants, and I require labour from you. Toil is the taskmaster, entitled to seize you and to take it out of you wherever he finds you; but there is a sanctuary. There is one asylum into which I invite you, and into which I forbid my taskmaster to follow you. Every seventh day shall be an absolute cessation. It is the Sabbath of the Lord your God, when you are to do no work yourself, nor are you to ask your man-servant or maid-servant to do any." The blessing which this weekly respite brought to Israel was unspeakable, and of all the boons which from Palestine have overflowed the surrounding world, there is not one which

has been more widely shared, or which ought to be more gratefully guarded; none which the sons of industry should so resolutely refuse to sell, or which they should so scorn to steal from one another. To quote the words of one whose testimony is not the less valuable that he despised all religions and hated Christianity. Says Humboldt,—"The selection of the seventh day is certainly the wisest that could have been made. To some extent it may be optional to shorten or lengthen labour on other days, but in regard to men's physical power and for perseverance in a monotonous employment, I am convinced that six days is just the true measure. There is likewise something humane in this, that the beasts which aid man in his labour share the rest. To lengthen the interval would be as inhuman as foolish. When, in the time of the Revolution, I spent several years in Paris, I saw this institution, despite its Divine origin, superseded by the dry and wooden decimal system. Only the tenth day was a day of rest, and all customary work was continued for nine long days. This being evidently too long, Sunday was kept by several as far as the police permitted, and the result was too much idleness."

3. A third peculiarity of this legislation is that it extends to the thoughts and intents of the heart. "Thou shalt not covet." Thou shalt not cherish wrong desires. Thou shalt not only forbear from

doing the sinful deed, but shalt forbear from thinking it. In all human legislation there is no such requirement. If there were, who could enforce it? If the tongue is silent, if the face is blank, if the hands are motionless, who can read his neighbour's heart? who can go and testify against him, "I saw him imagining the king's death. I saw a great greedy thought of his devouring a widow's house, traced the chimneys going down as you trace the horns of a kid down the throat of a constrictor. I saw him in a fearful fit of inward passion, shaking his spirit's fist, foaming with revenge and rancour, and pouring forth unuttered imprecations?" Man looketh on the outward appearance, and as long as our neighbour's outward conduct is correct we accept him as a good citizen. But the Lord looketh on the heart. God is a Spirit, and our truest self is a spirit also; and unless that hidden man of the heart be right, all outside accuracy profiteth nothing. And so in this its solemn and heart-searching close, as well as in its august commencement, the Decalogue reminds us of Him with whom we have to do. And although a commandment which to many occasions small concern, there is no one more fitted to arouse and quicken conscience. The Pharisee who has fancied that he was advancing straight up to heaven's gate, along the avenue of ample and well-observed commands, has come to a standstill on reaching this one. High arch-

ing above, with room on either side, a gateway for a camel, rises the first command, and, with head erect and broad phylactery, he marches on, full sail, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men,—no idolater, no blasphemer, no murderer, no extortioner,"—when suddenly he strikes his head a hard blow on the lintel, for the vista ends in "Thou shalt not covet;" and although he stoops and tries to wriggle through, the effort is in vain. It is the needle's eye, too strait for anything which does not yield the point, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

4. A fourth peculiarity is the place here given to parental authority, and consequently to filial piety. It has been much debated whether the fifth commandment closes the first table or commences the second; and we deem it more interesting that such a controversy should exist, than important to have it decided. It shows how well the precept would suit for either purpose,—to shut up our duties to our Father in heaven, or to preface our duties to one another. Like that remarkable architecture still found in the land of Bashan, where a door will be hewn out of the solid rock, and door, rock, and hinge are all a single stone, the two tables make but one law, and the fifth commandment is the axis or hinge on which they open and close—the connecting point where you pass from the one to the other. "Re-

vere thy God," says the first table, and "Honour thy father and mother," says this first commandment with promise: "Be a virtuous citizen," says the second table, "but in order to this be first an obedient child." "God teaches us reverence for Himself through the blessed name of 'Father,' and inspires love for what is holy by the boundless heart of 'mother.' He spreads His smile over the face of duty by the socialities of home, and gives us foretastes of heaven in the domesticities of the Church on earth: so that if parental love be trifled with, and those domestic influences in which is so much of God's own Spirit set at nought, the hold of man upon God is all but snapped."[1] So, children, obey your parents in the Lord, for it is right, and it is requisite to your highest welfare. God will not accept you as His dear and duteous child unless you be affectionate and deferential to those parents whom in life's first outset He has made so much His own vicegerents, and whose names you uttered, and with whose faces you grew familiar before you learned His own. And likewise, ye fathers, provoke them not by anger and caprice. Be so affectionate that they needs must love you, but withal so firm, so fair, so consistent that they still must "honour" you. As far as possible let your rule be a copy from God's own government,—kind without blind-

[1] *Yes or No*, I. 105, slightly altered.

ness; merciful and gracious, forgiving transgression yet not clearing the guilty; not spoiling by soft indulgence, and yet withholding no good thing when there is no good reason; insisting on obedience, yet always open to that cry of the repentant prodigal, "Father, I have sinned against thee." Where there go hand in hand a mother's love, tender, self-denying, inextinguishable, and a father's, wise, firm, and far-seeing, the best natural foundation is laid for piety; and he who has learned to honour such a father and mother has many helps and advantages for loving, trusting, and revering the God whom he has not seen.

So there it stood, this law so holy, just, and good, so brief, so plain, so self-commending in its requirements, so majestic in its origin,—there it remained by Jehovah's finger written on the tablets of stone; by Moses transcribed in the Book of the Covenant; engraven on the minds of the people by the solemnities of so august a promulgation. There that law remained, a revelation of its Author's holiness, a preacher of righteousness, a protest against the sins of men, and furnishing a text of tremendous import to every Elijah or Malachi or John the Baptist who came enforcing the claims of God, and appealing to the conscience of his countrymen. There it stood, a challenge to the world,—a moral dynamometer asking which of the sons of Adam could raise it to

the tenth or topmost mark, and thus earn eternal life—a brazen gate, with a new Eden on the other side, but closed with a ward-lock of ten letters, which could not be wrenched open, and of which no man possessed the password.

There it stood for fifteen centuries, when at last Christ came. Entering on His mission, one of the first things He did was to resuscitate this law and expound it all anew. The grand old pillar had disappeared. A jungle of weeds and worthless creepers had sprung up around it; and instead of insisting on the pure heart and the holy life, the school-divines of Palestine, the ritualists and word-splitters and tradition-mongers, laid down rules about the shape of scarves and the breadth of hems, and preached about the washing of pots and tables and the paying tithe of mint and cumin. With the sharp sword of indignant rebuke the Lord Jesus cleared away this noisome tangle, and whilst the newts and blind worms wriggled off from the unwelcome light, the Foundation of God, that memorial column inscribed with man's duty and his Maker's will, stood forth to view, and beholders were astonished at its majesty. The Sermon on the Mount was (so to speak) a sequel and a supplement to Sinai; but, as befitted the dawn of a more spiritual era, there was no cloud nor voice of trumpet to stun the soul and overwhelm the sense; but it was the

simple force of truth, the tremendous power of heart-searching words,—words penetrating as Omniscience, and weighty as unchanging righteousness. Then, as in many others of His sermons, the Lord Jesus expounded the Decalogue. From its negative He printed off the positive, and showed how beautiful is the resultant holiness, how blessed is the soul thus brought to harmony with God; and by something more divine than any rhetoric, by the authority with which He spake, and by His own sublime separateness from sin, He awakened in His hearers at once a wonder and a wistfulness: "Never man spake as this man. Oh that I were like Him!"

More especially did the Lord Jesus fill out the law, and bring its sayings into relief, by laying stress on its pervading principle. Of that law the epitome and essence is, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy soul, and thy neighbour as thyself." As we saw a little while ago, in thus grasping the springs of action, in claiming dominion over the thoughts and intents of the heart, this code differs from all human legislations, and, we may add, from all human religions; but it differs still more gloriously in the same direction in this master-principle, in thus dictating holy love as the mainspring of all goodness, the one sufficient but essential motive of all duty to God and those around. This epitome was not unknown to Israel. It occurs repeatedly

in the Pentateuch, and it was recited by the young ruler in his interview with Christ. But the Lord Jesus continually returned to it. It was the motive with Himself, and He delighted to dwell on it. In morals and religion *love* is the supreme philosophy. "If men loved God supremely, there would be no idolatry upon earth, nor any of its attendant abominations; no profaning of the name of God, nor making a gain of godliness; no perjuries nor hypocrisies, no pride nor self-complacency under the smiles of Providence; no murmuring, sullenness, nor suicide under its frowns. Love would render it men's meat and drink to obey God, and it would take everything well at His hands. And if they loved their fellow-creatures as themselves, there would be no wars between nations; no strifes between neighbours; no intolerance nor persecuting bitterness in religion; no deceit nor overreaching in trade: there would be no murders, thefts, nor robberies; no cruelty in parents or masters; no ingratitude nor disobedience in children or servants; no unkindness nor treachery between friends; no jealousies nor bitter contentions in families; in short, none of those streams of death, one or more of which flow through every vein of society, and poison its enjoyments."[1]

But the Lord Jesus was not content with ex-

[1] See Andrew Fuller's *Gospel its own Witness*, ch. iii.

pounding the law of God: He exemplified His own exposition. All that the law required He did; all that enters into our idea of perfect goodness He was. If love be the fulfilling of the law, love was but another name for Jesus Christ. And so, confronting the precept in all its breadth, fathoming it in all its depth, He met it with a corresponding compliance—an obedience in which nothing was exaggerated, nothing was omitted. Going up to the adamantine gate with its lock of the tenfold ward, it opened to the word "Fulfilment," and entering in, the Fulfiller of all Righteousness walked with God—in that presence where there is fulness of joy, and in the enjoyment of that ineffable complacency wherewith the Father regarded that well-beloved Son who always did the things that pleased Him.

Viewed as a covenant—as the condition of life everlasting—the Lord Jesus has fulfilled the law. To all its requirements, on behalf of His people He has presented an obedience spotless as His own perfection and as magnifying to that law as may be imagined from His own intrinsic glory. "Your work He hath done, your debt He hath paid," and in quitting the scene of His sojourn He hath left an open door through which the weakest and least worthy may enter in, and through the merits of the great Forerunner find acceptance and the smile of God.

Christ has done more. To Israel rescued from Egypt the Decalogue was not merely a code of laws or rule of conduct, but it formed the basis or condition of a national covenant. On the side of Israel that covenant was perpetually broken and its conditions never were fulfilled; but looking forward to a happier time, by the mouth of Jeremiah Jehovah promised, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord;) but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my LAW in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."[1]

These days have come. The first of them was Pentecost. Ten days after Christ's return to heaven —remarkably enough, it was the anniversary of Sinai, the day when the law was given, the fiftieth day after the Feast of Passover: but instead of thunder and the voice of a trumpet there was a noise as of a rushing mighty wind, and instead

[1] Jer. xxxi. 31-33.

of forked lightnings on the distant mountain-top, on the heads of every one of them were flaming mitres,—tongues of bright but unconsuming fire. It was no second giving of the law; it was the inauguration of the gospel. There were no stone tables in their hands, but heaven was in their hearts, for the Holy Spirit was there. Effectually set free from the old legal spirit, they were full of the mind that was in Christ, and so full of might and power on behalf of Jesus; and they not only spake with tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance, but began to lead such lives and entered on such a career as the world could little have expected from the men of Galilee.

And, brethren, this is our dispensation. The Holy Spirit has been given. Not as in the manifestations which made Pentecost so marvellous, but in mild, assuring, strengthening power, God's Spirit will be with you if you ask His aid. He will awaken in you a hunger after righteousness,—a hunger which in the Father's house shall be abundantly filled. He will teach you to know the Lord, so that you shall not need to ask your neighbour. He will show you God's covenant—that new and better one of which the terms have been fulfilled by the Divine Surety, so that you have only to take the benefit. And freeing you from the law's condemning, threatening power, He will write it in

your heart, endearing it as the rule of your own conduct and the revelation of God's righteousness.

Nor will you like this law the less because its opening sentence is the gospel: "I am the Lord thy God: thou shalt have no other gods before me." 'Thou shalt have no god but me.' Addressing every sinful child of Adam, the Possessor of heaven and earth says, 'For thy own God take me.' Now that in the person of Jesus his Son, now that in the person of Him who says, "I am Jesus your Brother," God has drawn near to our guilty family; His overture to each is, "I am the Lord thy God," and the right reciprocation is, "My Lord and my God." "O my soul, thou hast said unto Jehovah, Thou art my Lord." Is it not wonderful? Is not this to "bow the heavens and come down"? Is not this a condescension truly divine, that addressing dust and ashes the Eternal should say—that addressing a weak empty worm the All-sufficient should say—that addressing sin and impurity Infinite Holiness should say, "I am thy God"? But He says it. To put an end to all cavil He puts the gospel into the form of a precept, and from the top of Sinai and in the forefront of the Decalogue He preaches that gospel, and to every hearer says—what is the end and essence of the gospel,—"For thy own God take me." Some think it presumption to appropriate a gift unspeak-

able or to accept too kind an invitation; but surely it is no presumption to obey a precept—it is great presumption to refuse compliance with God's command. And God commands you to be happy. He commands you to be saved. He commands you, as your very first act of obedience, to become His subject and His son. Will you not reply, "O Lord, thou art my God. Other gods have had dominion over me; but now their bands are loosed, and I am thy servant. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

XVII.

The Theocratic King and the Oath of Allegiance.

(SINAI COVENANT.)

'And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."—Ex. XIX. 3-6.

"And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words."—Ex. XXIV. 3-8.

FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS was a learned Jew who flourished in the latter half of the first century, and who

wrote two admirable works on Hebrew history. Besides these he published a tract, still extant, and known as *Josephus against Apion.* Of this tract one object is to explain to Gentile readers Hebrew peculiarities, and to vindicate as facts what many of them deemed mere Jewish fables. In the course of it, having occasion to explain the Hebrew polity, he uses the following language:—"Some legislators have placed their people under a monarchy, others under an oligarchy, and others have resolved them into a republic. But our legislator took no account of these modes of government, but instituted what we may call a *Theocracy*[1]—ascribing all power and authority to God, and persuading them to have regard to Him as the author of all their privileges. He taught them that it was impossible to escape God's observation in any of their outward actions or even in any of their inward thoughts; and his legislation had this advantage over other legislations, that whereas they made religion a part of virtue Moses made all virtues a part of religion. As so many ingredients in piety towards God, he included justice, and fortitude, and temperance, and the loyalty to one another of the different members of the commonwealth."[2]

As far as I know, it is in the passage that the

[1] *τὶς εἴποι βιασαμένος τὸν λονὸν ϑεοκοατίαν.*
[2] Jos. *c. Apion*, ii. 17.

word "Theocracy" first occurs—a word so convenient and so constantly used, and which is so admirably descriptive of Hebrew polity, as distinguished from every other. Commonwealths like Athens and republican Rome were *self-governed;* monarchies like Persia and Egypt were *king-governed;* but Israel, rescued from Egypt, and as God designed to plant it in Palestine, was *God-governed.* Neither Moses, nor Aaron, nor Joshua claimed to be king or first consul or president of the republic; but the Lord was the king, the Lord was the lawgiver, and Moses and all the rest were only His ministers or servants—the channels or internuncios through whom He published His edicts and made known His will.

Although eventually modified, although conceding to the foreseen desire of the people to have a visible head of their commonwealth, Jehovah Himself gave directions as to the regal office, yet the true and original type was, in the word coined by Josephus, a theocracy, or government by God. And had the people but been worthy, no position could be nobler. Here they were just rescued from thraldom—clean sundered from Egypt and its abominable idolatries, baptized in the Red Sea, on the eagle wings of Omnipotence transported into this large place with its sabbatic silence and its impregnable seclusion, and Jehovah draws near,

and if they themselves are inclined and feel equal to it, He offers to be Himself their captain and their king. "Let it be a compact. Make a covenant and keep it, and ye shall be all my own—from all earth's peoples selected as my own peculiar treasure,—a kingdom of priests, a holy nation." Had the people but been equal to it here was an occasion unprecedented, an opportunity given to a new and virgin nation to start on a career the like of which had never been exhibited, receiving their laws from God and from Him deriving their protection,—God dwelling amongst them palpably, fighting their battles, brightening their abodes, preserving their going out and coming in, and with His approving presence glorifying their entire existence.

The ideal was imperfectly realized. Except to a very partial extent, and for brief intervals, the nation never rose to its high calling, and seldom was it that either the camp of the pilgrimage or the land of the promise suggested the heaven on earth which it ought to have been. But no knowledge of Israel's frailty, no foresight of human failure, hindered the Most High from propounding His own gracious plan, and showing Moses in the mount its pattern—a pattern suggestive of higher things elsewhere—for if God was so kind and condescending as to come down and offer to be their sovereign,

how could earthly life more nearly approximate the life of the celestials, what earthly citizenship could come nearer the citizenship in heaven, than that nationality which recognised the Holy One of Israel as its almighty and its only King?

When in the history of a nation any great epoch arrives, it is usual to emphasize it by some solemn celebration. A great deliverance has taken place, a new dynasty has acceded, a new prince begins to reign; and on the one side a constitution is proclaimed or a code is promulgated—on the other the oath of allegiance is taken, and the people vow to be faithful to the sovereign.

In one sense Jehovah had all along been the head of the Hebrew race, and as far back as the days of Abraham He had sworn, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee." But now that seed had become a mighty nation, a separate and self-contained community, and, released from slavery, it was in a position to judge and act for itself; and therefore the opportunity was given to the nation by a distinct and deliberate act to accept or reject Jehovah as its king.

On Jehovah's side a constitution had already been proclaimed, and a code promulgated: "If ye will obey my voice and keep my covenant, ye shall be my peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation;" and mounting His theocratic throne

amidst thunder and lightning and the pomp of flaming seraphim, the Eternal had proclaimed, as the essence of His code and the basis of all further legislation, the Ten Commands. And now the time was come that the people should plight their faith, and vow allegiance to their mighty but condescending Monarch. And with a view to this they all were mustered, and by some suitable arrangement Moses orally communicated "all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments." They were good precepts and gracious promises, and the people could only answer with one voice, "All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." This preliminary assent received, Moses retired and consigned to writing the various provisions—the Decalogue, and most probably those regulations contained in the intervening chapters; and next morning early he came forth with the written document, and met the assembled people.

That day was a high day,—the swearing-in of an assembled people to their Redeemer-Sovereign,—and with much work to do, Moses rose betimes. Beneath the mountain, and at God's footstool, he reared an altar, and facing it, to denote the twelve tribes of Israel, he set up twelve pillars; and as soon as the young men appointed for the purpose had slain the calves and bullocks, and half the blood had been poured upon the altar, and whilst the

smoke of the oblation began to ascend into the serene summer sky, Moses produced the roll of the covenant, and from the volume of that book read all the words which God Himself had dictated; and when to the august recital from over all the plain a multitudinous murmur answered, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient," to ratify the deed Moses took a hyssop-sprinkler, and, dipping it in mingled blood and water, he showered the crimson rain over the swarming throng, and by way of signature and seal, with a few drops of the self-same blood he bedewed the all-important document, and set it aside till that sacred shrine was ready, soon after known as the casket of the covenant, the Ark of the Testimony. And from this great swearing-in at the foot of the mount which might not be touched, the people passed away with a sublime and awful consciousness that God had spoken and so had they. "I will be your God," had Jehovah said, "And all that Thou hast spoken will we do," had they replied, and, registered in heaven, it seemed as if the vow were written on the floor and roof at once of that great desert sanctuary Gone into God's memory, if from their own it ever faded, the stones of that altar and these twelve pillars would cry aloud and condemn the covenant-breakers; and even although the volume of the book should perish, and no blood of confirmation

blush again to confront the false swearers, the words of that great vow had burned deep into every conscience, and rather than that God should be without a witness Sinai would once more break silence, and that "faithful witness in heaven," the sun, which that morning shone over the grey wilderness of Paran, would publish to the universe the treason.

It was a great event, the transaction of that day, which on the separate and self-contained nationality of Israel placed a crown of glory, by superadding Jehovah's sovereignty. Every devout and believing soul through that populous camp, looking at the fiery-cloudy column, as it moved ahead, at once a royal standard and an aërial fortress, could say to himself with thrilling assurance, "The Lord is our defence; the Holy One of Israel is our King." And although in later centuries between the people and their King immortal and invisible a monarch was interposed, both visible and mortal, faith and affection always ascended to Jehovah as the true king in Jeshurun, and under pious princes like Hezekiah and Josiah, when the covenant was renewed, overlooking, or at least overleaping the earthly ruler, the people swore again the oath of allegiance to the Sovereign Supreme, the Divine and undying Head of the Hebrew commonwealth.

This theocratic element accounts for many things in Hebrew institutions and Old Testament history.

For instance, it explains the severity with which idolatry was punished. It was not only a sin, but a treason. Amalek was not more truly the king of Moab, Pharaoh was not more exclusively king of Egypt, than Jehovah was king of Israel; and the Israelite who bowed the knee to Bel or Moloch, who adored the golden calf or Apis, he not only committed a gross and disgraceful sin, but a capital offence, and for revolting against his Liege, his Lord and Sovereign, he was liable to be cut off from among his people. And although there were good reasons over and above why such outrages as the golden calf should be visited by signal retribution, it must not be forgotten as an important element that the thousands who were cut down on that occasion were mutineers against their Captain,—rebels caught red-handed in revolt against their King. And so, although in a somewhat different way, the same principle explains other incidents in which our first feeling may be a sense of extreme severity. For instance, soon after Jericho was taken, the Israelites were mysteriously repulsed in an assault on Ai. Inquiring at the Lord, the answer was, "Israel hath sinned, and they have transgressed my covenant: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and they have also stolen, yea and dissembled also, and have put it among their own stuff." As Josephus says, "The Israel-

ites were taught that nothing could escape the observation of their Divine King, either in their outward actions or their inward thoughts." But this was a lesson hard to learn, and needed to be enforced by some startling instances. And here was one. Flushed with an easy and surprising success at Jericho, they were all the rather chagrined by their defeat at Ai. It seemed utterly inexplicable, but, though burning to revenge the disaster, they were told it would be vain to resume the battle till a secret fault was confessed and put away. So all pleading ignorance, it was referred back to God's omniscience, and when amongst the assembled million His finger was firmly placed on the son of Carmi, "My son," said Joshua, "give glory to the God of Israel, and confess what thou hast done;" and as the golden wedge and Babylonish garment came to light, the troubler of Israel paid the forfeit not more of his covetousness than of his atheism, and as the smoke of Achan's funeral pile ascended in the vale of Achor, spectators slowly turned away musing on the painful lesson, but penetrated with the conviction,—"Yea, darkness hideth not from Thee."

Need I say how, under the new dispensation, the theocratic principle has been perfected! It is no longer national but personal. The Most High does not now lay hold of a captive nation, and, wrenching

it from the jaws of the oppressor, carry it on eagle wings into some desert sanctuary; but He lays hold on an individual. Some slave of Satan He singles out, and, rescuing him from his cruel taskmaster, He brings him to Himself and says, "I will be thy God; take hold of my covenant and thou shalt be my peculiar treasure;" and thenceforward made a king and a priest himself, he becomes a God-governed man.

And indeed the only way to be truly free is to be God-governed; the only man who walks at liberty is the man who is "under law to Christ." During the days of the Saviour's sojourn there were men possessed by the devil. As if to impersonate and make palpable those evil propensities by which bad men are borne along, and in order to make more personal the contest between the devil and Him who came to destroy the works of the devil, in some instances it was permitted to demons to take personal possession of bad men; that is to say, when a bad man had sold himself to some course of wickedness, an evil spirit took possession of him and urged him on to yet wilder extremes of the self-same wickedness; and even although lucid moments might intervene during which the man grew sick of his foul familiar, and would fain have turned him out, the unclean spirit was sure to come back again and carry his unhappy victim captive at his will; and

it was not till Jesus spoke that mighty word, which "devils fear and fly," that the foul fiend absconded to his own place and left the vacated house open to a worthier occupancy. If that vacated sanctuary received the Saviour—if into his thankful heart the man received his mighty Deliverer, by becoming the servant of Christ he became master of himself. He who had been fiend-possessed became self-possessed by becoming God-possessed,—Christ's servant, and so his own master.

And so, if you have not given yourself to God you are still the servant of sin; his servant you are whom you obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness. If you have not given yourself to God, you are still in the bond of iniquity; you carry your Pharaoh within—a tyrant in the shape of some master-sin, or "many masters" —so many petty tyrants, so many domineering task-masters in the shape of divers lusts and passions—foul desires, fantastic follies, lawless affections, to which you yield by turns—sometimes cursing your infatuation, and sometimes drowning remorse in the delirium of a new excitement, till, your strength and substance wasted, youth gone, strength and beauty gone, money gone, health gone, life going, eternity coming, you exclaim, "I have played the fool; I have erred exceedingly."

Do you desire deliverance? Would you be free

from this hateful dominion, this horrible lust, this frantic possession? Then give yourself to God. In the lucid interval fall at Christ's feet, and, like the dispossessed demoniac, beg that He would not leave you, nor suffer you to leave Him; and as Christ's Spirit takes possession of your mind, as in answer to prayer the Comforter comes, in the peace and the purity which He sheds abroad, unruly emotions will subside, angry passions will obey the voice, "Peace, be still!" and a stronger than Satan having entered in and expelled the usurper, you will taste the blessings of a renovated heart and a heavenly rule, and will find that you have returned to your right mind in returning to your rightful Master.

In the gospel, God invites each of us to take Himself for our God, and He offers to take each of us as His peculiar treasure; and it is well that, like Israel at Sinai, this kind offer of His should be met by an act of our own, express and explicit. Personal covenanting and solemn self-dedications were not unusual among our godly ancestors, and documents like the following still are extant:—

"*Oct.* 20, 1686.—I take God the Father to be my chiefest good and highest end. I take God the Son to be my Prince and Saviour. I take God the Holy Ghost to be my Sanctifier, Teacher, Guide, and Comforter. I take the Word of God to be my rule in

all my actions, and the people of God to be my people in all conditions. And this I do deliberately, sincerely, freely, and for ever.

(Signed) "MATTHEW HENRY."

And as a date, as a definitive landmark and starting-point, there may be an advantage in a form thus written and subscribed; but if made too minute, above all, if in any way it assume the form of an oath or vow, it will become a snare and a source of subsequent distress and embarrassment, for, after every declension and failure, you will feel that you have been unfaithful in your covenant, and that you have sworn deceitfully. Happily for us, God's voice has been obeyed, and His covenant has been kept on our behalf by our glorious Representative, and it only remains for us, by a meek and thankful assent, to enter into all the blessings thus bought for us, whilst, with a voice more subduing than the trumpet of Sinai, Christ's sacrifice calls for our surrender. Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price; tell the Saviour how thankful you are, and how willing; and whilst you deeply feel that for all your future constancy you are dependent on His own good Spirit in the competition for your heart's supremacy, do you decide for that King who reigns in righteousness, and who makes His subjects kings and priests unto God His Father.

XVIII.

The Tabernacle.

"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation; and thou shalt put therein the ark of the testimony," etc.—Ex. XL. 1-38.

ISRAEL had escaped from Egypt; the Moral Law had been given from Mount Sinai; the Most High had revealed Himself as the self-existent and eternal I AM, to the exclusion of the lords many and gods many which Egypt and other nations adored, and a very solemn transaction had just been completed, on which, as on a nail fastened in a sure place, hung the whole future of the peculiar people. To the nation whom He had so signally rescued, whom through the Red Sea and across the burning sands He had borne on wings of His own omnipotence into the heart of Horeb, to the nation resting in this safe asylum on the way to its promised land, Jehovah drew near, and, claiming to be their God, He at the same time offered to be their King. He

offered to bring them into a relation to Himself such as no other nation had ever occupied :—" If ye will obey my voice and keep my covenant, ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." And God's gracious overture the people joyfully reciprocated. On a set day and a solemn, they took the oath of allegiance to their Heavenly King, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient;" and thenceforward the Head of their nation was neither Pharaoh nor Moses nor any mortal man; they had a Sovereign who was deathless and invincible: their only and immediate Monarch was God; the Holy One of Israel was their King.

This theocracy or government by God was the great distinction of the Hebrew people; and the day when it was ratified by covenant may be deemed the main hinge of Hebrew history. That great transaction, the National Covenant, we have already considered, and we must now turn our thoughts to some of those details which necessarily followed.

And in considering these, we must not forget that Israel's King was also Israel's God, and that in the peculiar politico-religious organization which the arrangement involved, it was needful to provide at once for the worship of God and for the social welfare of the people.

The Most High—the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him; but linked to matter as we are, living in these bodies and limited to a certain space, locality enters into our thoughts when we think of God; and ever since we were banished from the bowers of Eden, the longing of all earnest spirits has been after something palpable and near, a longing after God manifest and God in the midst of us as well as after God propitious and reconciled.

This longing of devout and earnest spirits was most graciously met in the camp of Israel. From the memorable night of the exodus there had always moved before the camp or hovered over it a mystic symbol, cloud by day and fire by night, the sign and cognisance of their celestial Leader. And now Jehovah said, "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them;"[1] and to the invitation the people replied so willingly that gold and silver came in to the amount of a quarter of a million sterling.[2] With this large offering, acting under Divine direction, and carrying out the work with the aid of Aholiab and Bezaleel, Moses reared and furnished forth the tabernacle.

It was a great day, that New-Year's day when the tabernacle was at last erected. It was twelve months after their departure from Egypt, and the first New-Year's day which they had spent in the

[1] Ex. xxv. 8. [2] Ex. xxxviii. 24-31; see Kitto's *Pictorial Bible.*

wilderness. Everything was ready. At measured intervals were placed sockets or pediments of silver, and on these were set up columns of acacia-wood so thickly overlaid that they stood up like eight-and-forty golden pillars, joined together by transverse beams, similarly resplendent. Inside of these pillars were suspended gorgeous tapestries, with cherubim wrought into a ground alternately blue, purple, and scarlet; and outside the walls were covered successively by hair-cloth, by a sort of morocco leather, and on the top of all, as a protection from the weather, by a stout pall of badgers' skins; and the roof resembled the sides, so that if any one could have entered, he would have found himself in an oblong apartment, about fifty feet in length and one-third as broad, roofed over and hung round with curtains of delicate texture, all wimpling with the golden wings of cherubim. But inside the full length was never seen, for at the end ten cubits were cut off to form the Holy of Holies. This inner shrine was divided from the rest of the tabernacle by a veil or beautiful curtain of byssus, and contained the Ark of the Covenant. That ark was a golden chest, into which Moses put the two tables of the Law, Aaron's blossoming staff, an urn full of manna, and the book of the Covenant;[1] and it was surmounted by a

[1] Kalisch (*Exodus*, p. 479) says that the two tables alone were *in* the ark, the other objects before or beside it.

throne entirely golden, backed and over-canopied by two cherubs with outspread wings—a mercy-seat or throne of grace reserved for the Shekinah, for Him who, marching in the cloudy pillar, also sat between the cherubim. This inner shrine—the throne-room and presence-chamber of the Eternal—was trod by mortal foot but once a year, on that great day of atonement when, protected by sacrificial blood, the High Priest entered—entered to present the propitiation for the people, and returned to show that God was still good to Israel; but inside the tabernacle the more spacious anteroom called "the Holy Place" was accessible to all the priesthood. By night and day it derived its illumination from a massive candelabrum of seven branches, with lamps of oil-olive, softly burning; and this apartment had an atmosphere exquisite with odour: for another prominent object in it was a golden altar on which no victim was ever laid, but on which Aaron burned incense twice each day. The other remarkable object in the furniture of this Holy Place was a golden table on which every Sabbath twelve loaves of unleavened bread were placed—the shew-bread or loaves of presentation—on behalf of the twelve tribes, a recognition or remembrance to Him who day by day was giving them their daily bread. All round the tabernacle ran a spacious enclosure, open overhead, but fenced round by cur-

tains, with an entrance from the east, and open to every Israelite. The most striking objects within this court of the congregation were a large altar and a basin-fountain of brass. This fountain or laver was intended for the priests, who there washed their hands and feet before engaging in any sacred service ; and it was interesting as a memorial of female piety. Brass was scarce in the camp of Israel, but the ladies surrendered their burnished mirrors in number sufficient to construct this ornamental tank, a free-will offering.[1]

The tabernacle was a peripatetic shrine,—a cathedral that could be carried about,—a temple of canvas and tapestry which accompanied Israel in their wanderings, and which sufficed as a visible centre of worship, till such time as the waving tapestry solidified into carvings of cedar, and the badger-skins were replaced by tall arcades of marble, and the tent had grown to a temple. And that New-Year's day, when Aaron and his sons came forth in the gorgeous garments which they now for the first time put on, and when over the dedicated shrine the cloud descended, and such a glory filled the tabernacle that Moses and the attendant ministers were forced to withdraw, devotion must have felt something like what, on a similar occasion, Solomon expressed, "Will God in very deed dwell with man

[1] Ex. xl. 17-33.

upon earth?" and as all through that New-Year's night and the many nights succeeding, above the the tent of the testimony there was seen "the appearance of fire until the morning,"[1] each believing Israelite laid him down and took his quiet sleep, fearing no evil, for He that keepeth Israel would neither slumber nor sleep.

It was a fine ending to that first year in the wilderness, and it is a fine ending to the book of Exodus (xl. 34-38). "At the beginning of the book we found the descendants of Jacob a multitude of ill-treated and idolatrous slaves; we leave them a free nation, the guardians of eternal truth, the witnesses of overwhelming miracles. Released from the vain and busy worldliness of Egypt, they encamp in the silent desert, in isolated and solemn solitude, holding converse only with their thoughts and with their God. Before them stood the visible habitation of Him whom they acknowledged and adored as their rescuer from Egyptian thraldom; the mysterious structure disclosed to them many profound ideas of their new religion; and they respected the priests as their representatives and their mediators. Between God and His people communion was opened; life had its aim, and virtue its guide."[2]

In order to complete our view of the Hebrew religion and worship, we ought to examine its

[1] Numb. ix. 15. [2] Kalisch on Exodus, p. 621.

various sacrifices and ceremonies; the sin-offerings, the trespass-offerings, the thank-offerings; the festivals, the passover, the feast of tabernacles, the great day of atonement; the law of the leper, the laws about priests and Levites. But to do this would need many lectures. Those who would like to examine the subject fully will find abundant information in Bonar *on Leviticus*, in Principal Fairbairn's *Typology of Scripture*, and in Dr. Gordon's *Christ in the Old Testament*. Of the entire subject there is an excellent epitome in Cowper's hymn on the "Old Testament Gospel," which even those who are most familiar with it will forgive me for reading over :—

"Israel, in ancient days,
Not only had a view
Of Sinai in a blaze,
But learn'd the Gospel too;
The types and figures were a glass
In which they saw a Saviour's face.

The Paschal sacrifice,
And blood-besprinkled door,
Seen with enlighten'd eyes
And once applied with power,
Would teach the need of other blood
To reconcile an angry God.

The Lamb, the Dove, set forth
His perfect innocence,
Whose blood of matchless worth
Should be the soul's defence;

For He who can for sin atone,
Must have no failings of his own.

The scape-goat on his head
The people's trespass bore,
And to the desert led,
Was to be seen no more:
In him our Surety seem'd to say,
'Behold, I bear your sins away.'

Dipt in his fellow's blood,
The living bird went free;
The type, well understood,
Expressed the sinner's plea;
Described a guilty soul enlarged,
And by a Saviour's death discharged.

Jesus, I love to trace,
Throughout the sacred page,
The footsteps of Thy grace,—
The same in every age!
Oh! grant that I may faithful be
To clearer light vouchsafed to me!"

Reverting to the Tabernacle: It served its purpose. At the time it was set up the worship of the one living and true God had become almost extinct; but the Tabernacle, with its successor the Temple, was a perpetual protest against idolatry,—a centre and rallying-point to monotheistic worship. And the doctrine of the Divine unity and spirituality has triumphed. Monotheists, or believers in one God, supreme, self-existent, and distinct from the universe He has created, are not only counted by hun-

dreds of millions, but they include all that is worth naming of the world's intelligence and civilisation. All the inhabitants of Europe are Monotheists. Every Christian is a Monotheist, so is every Jew, so is every Mussulman.

But the tabernacle had a purpose still more precise, more practical and home-coming. So to speak, it brought God again into the midst of men. He who in the bowers of Eden had been so friendly and familiar, but who at man's sin withdrew, and who from that time had rarely broken the silence, this God it again brought into our midst, and recording His name in His appointed place, He declared it to be His fixed abode and chosen dwelling.

And yet condescending, close-coming as was this sojourn of Deity in the Tabernacle of the Testimony —assuring as it was to see in the midst of the camp those symbols of propitious and protecting Omnipotence, and in cases of emergency delightful as it was to be able to inquire at the oracle, and from the Urim and Thummim receive a decisive response, there was still in the midst of the manifestation something withheld, and notwithstanding the local proximity there remained on many a mind a certain sense of remoteness. The symbols were there, and Omnipotence was there; but the cloud was not God, the fire was not God, the tabernacle was not God; and there still was room for the prayer, "O

Thou that dwellest between the cherubim, shine forth," and in sight of the Shekinah, and his own face shining with insufferable lustre, Moses still could pray, "O Lord, I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." But as soon as a body was prepared for God's beloved Son, as soon as the Word came and *tabernacled* amongst us, the glory was beheld for which an expectant Church had sighed and waited, —the glory of the only-begotten, the express image of the Father, full of grace and truth. His name was called Immanuel, God-with-Us; and so express, so complete, so conclusive was the manifestation, above all, so fitted to our frame, so personal, so human, so brotherly, that neither heart nor intellect should ask for more, and none need now repeat the behest of Philip, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," for he that seeth Jesus seeth God.

"Destroy this temple;" it was no longer a tent but a temple,—"Destroy it," said Jesus, alluding to the tent or temple of His body, "and in three days I will build it up again." Yes, this was the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man! the body that was born of the Virgin Mary, and about to be crucified by Pontius Pilate,—the holy and beautiful house in which the Godhead had dwelt for years, and in whose "moving tent" He had perambulated the towns and villages of that Holy Land, giving forth oracles, attracting to Him-

self the guilty, the sin-laden, and such as were out of the way, and finishing off by that great oblation in which the Priest Supreme offered up the Victim Divine,—in which the series ended and the symbols were fulfilled, for the Son of God had offered up Himself.

That temple they destroyed, but in three days the Divine inhabitant had built it up again—this time a body more beautiful than ever, indestructible, immortal, death-defying, a norm or pattern of that glorious body which the Saviour designs to give to each disciple. And there is in the thought something truly animating. Of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man, there is now a restoration unspeakably glorious and absolutely indestructible. Over that celestial body in which Christ hath ascended death hath no dominion ; and in due season each ransomed spirit shall be the tenant of such another temple. The holy and beautiful house on the heights of Zion was not a greater advance on the tabernacle, with its ropes and its poles and its canvas, than will be the improvement on the present imperfect and disordered materialism of your house from heaven. It will be a glorious body, one which pain cannot prostrate, which accident cannot damage, which advancing years cannot render less efficient, and one which has for ever done with dying. It will be a body exquisitely

organized, where the mind shall have no volitions for which the members shall not find the instrument or the vehicle; where the heart, the understanding shall have no thoughts nor feelings for which the lips, the eyes, shall not find language. And although looking at some countenance, venerable or lovely, behind whose translucent veil something of Heaven's glory was enshrined, we may have felt for the moment, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" could we draw nearer and listen to the language of the actual inmate, we should sometimes find him complaining of straitened space and inappropriate accommodation. "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; for we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. . . . . Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given to us the earnest of the Spirit."

XIX.

The Divine Glory.

"I beseech thee, show me thy glory."—Ex. xxxiii. 18.

When the funeral of Da Costa took place last month at Amsterdam, when the church was filled with mourners and the grand organ had played a soft and muffled tune, the music grew articulate and the assembly melted into tears as they sang,—

"Like as the hart for water-brooks
In thirst doth pant and bray;
So pants my longing soul, O God,
That come to thee I may.

My soul for God, the living God,
Doth thirst: when shall I near
Unto thy countenance approach,
And in God's sight appear?"

They felt that the words were true. They were descriptive of the brother departed. As philosopher and historian, as jurist and divine, above all as the sweet singer of the Netherlands, his had been a life of achievement; but still more conspicuous than all achievement was a certain air of unrest—a certain pressing forward and looking upward—in one word,

a certain aspect of continual aspiration. The goal of his spirit was God. It was neither to the temple of fame nor to the chair of science that his ambition had pointed; but he had showed plainly that the magnet which drew him—which, in the meanwhile, made him touch the earth so lightly, and which, by and bye, would draw the very soul forth from the body,—he showed that this mighty attraction was infinite excellence. And now he had reached it. He had reached the living God, and was drinking from that river of pleasures for which he had all his life been panting, and tears of triumphant sympathy mingled with their tenderness. And no doubt it deepened the feeling to remember that the same funeral hymn had sounded over the grave of a still mightier minstrel, Bilderdijk, thirty years before, whose life, like Da Costa's, had been marked by high genius and exalted goodness, but still more by longings after a greatness and goodness which earth has not got to offer, and which it is needful to put off these bodies in order to attain.

Where intellectual elevation and deep devotion exist together there is sure to be somewhat of this feeling. Moses is an instance. Through eighteen lectures we have traced his history and his services —as scholar, warrior, patriot, as leader of the Exodus, as mediator between the people and their celestial Monarch; and we have had occasion to

admire him as the man of genius, as the man of culture, and above all as the man of God. But nowhere do we get a more vivid glimpse into the depths of his being than just in the words of our text, and, taken in connection with the man and with all the attendant circumstances, they teach us many a lesson.

1. They teach us that it is *God's* glory which an enlightened spirit longs to see. There are sights which we are accustomed to speak of as "glorious;" and of these Moses had seen many. He had seen Pharaoh in all his glory, and as a resident in the court and as a military captain he had seen his own share of martial pomps and ovations. He had seen glorious landscapes—the Nile brimming over with bounty, sunrise from behind the Pyramids, and the majestic mountains of this great wilderness; and the ninetieth Psalm and all the poems in the Pentateuch show how alive he was to the spectacles of beauty. But the glory after which he panted was God's own: "For Thee, O God—O living God! —for Thee." And so, my friends, it is well if you belong to that little company who inherit the earth, for on the most of men this glorious universe is wasted. At sight of ocean, earth, or sky their eye never tingles, their bosom never heaves, the tear never runs over. But if you be not only susceptible but devout, mingling with your emotion, and often

overmastering it, will be the feeling of God's own presence, and in a sense not pantheistic but truly scriptural you will see Him ride past on the wings of the wind, and will feel His rest-giving nearness in the sabbath of the silent hills; the eye that never closes will look down on you from amongst the twinkling stars; suspended a solitary waif in the centre of that round-rimmed sea, infinitude above and mysterious miles below, the everlasting arm will enclasp and uphold you; and like the Hebrew priest in the holy place, viewing the brightness which emanated from within the Holy of Holies, as from under the edges of the veiling night an opalescent splendour begins to issue into the eastern sky, you will welcome the coming day with something like the prayer, "O Thou that sittest between the cherubim, shine forth."

And yet, although there is far more truth in such feelings than in their absence—although a universe blank and silent, with no God living and moving in it, is a universe with the glory blotted out,—the mind which sees the most of such glory will long for something more, and even amidst the sublimest scenes of nature will wistfully repeat the prayer, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory."

2. And if we pass to revelations more articulate and explicit, we shall find the principle still obtain, and he who has seen the most is the likeliest to ask

for more. In this respect no one had been more favoured than Moses. The "God of glory" had appeared to him at the bush, and had spoken to him the incommunicable name. He had seen the glory of God on that night, so much to be remembered, when Jehovah's royal ensign fired the firmament, and under Heaven's immediate guidance the glorious march began. And but a few days were past since this Sinai smoked, and whilst the glory of the Lord like devouring fire encircled the mountain-top, the voice of the Eternal filled the surrounding solitudes with words which echo still and shall never pass away. But all this did not suffice, and in the mind of Moses there was only enkindled a longing for some manifestation more intimate and soul-contenting. Jehovah's answer shows in what direction the heart of Moses pointed. "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory," says Moses. "Yes," answers Jehovah, "I will; I will show thee my goodness, my kindness, and my grace." Of majesty and grandeur he had already seen as much as heart could wish, as much as the frail body could endure. The personality, the might, the holiness of the Most High were never likely to be effaced from his awe-struck spirit as long as he had any being; but still amidst all its condescension, what wonder if the terrible majesty still left an impression of something far-off and formidable? But just at this very instant in the

devouring fire had opened an inlet mild and merciful, and Israel's intercessor glimpsed a glory still interior—the heart of Jehovah, rich in forgiveness and radiating forth its ceaseless loving-kindness. Not only had He pardoned a most scandalous insult to His supremacy, and in answer to Moses' bold entreaty consented still to abide by the ungrateful people—"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest,"—but with overflowing tenderness He had spoken most friendly words to the intercessor himself, "I will do as thou hast spoken, for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name," and grasping at that gracious word—pressing up into the exalted intimacy of which he had obtained an earnest so encouraging, Moses replied, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." "Let me still nearer. Prolong this blessed moment, and admit me still further into Thy presence."

And so of every soul divinely enlightened, or rather, I should say, of every soul divinely enkindled. God is its chiefest joy. Whether it knows it or not, God has come to be its supreme felicity, and nothing can make it profoundly and abidingly glad except the sense of His friendship and a certain nearness to Himself. Nor is this a desire which a single vouchsafement can appease, or which can live contentedly on even the most marvellous and trans-

porting memories. "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary." And the believer goes back to the Bible, he hails the return of the Sabbath, he welcomes another Communion as a possible occasion of new insight to the Divine perfection, and as a likely means for enabling him to realize more blissfully the friendship of All-sufficiency. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." And when to the entreaty, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory," is answered, "No man can see Me and live," faith and affection will sometimes venture to reply, with St. Augustine, "Then that I may see Thee, Lord, let me die."

The prayer of Moses was answered. Another morning came, so different from that other and august occasion when a quaking multitude surrounded a thundering mount; this time there was neither blackness nor tempest nor sound as of a trumpet, but, with his two stone tables under his arm, the lawgiver ascended in the clear cool day-spring. He ascended and sought the appointed place, and as there in the cleft of the rock he waited, a cloud drew nigh—a cloud like that which floated

above the tabernacle, and as the Lord passed by a voice, still and small perhaps, but kind and clear, proclaimed—"The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." It was enough. The Lord had answered the prayer of His servant, and had showed to Moses His glory, the glory of His goodness. Moses bowed his head and worshipped, and, during the protracted interview of the forty following days, a perfect love cast out fear, and from the pavilion of this friendly presence and its rapt communion Moses came down with that shining face, which only re-appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. I incline to think that piety of the highest pitch, piety of the pattern nearest Heaven, is that which, with David, pants after the living God,—is that which, with Moses, cries, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." But it is not common now. It was more common when they dwelt in dens and in dungeons, in caves of the earth and in clefts of the rock. The insulated cloud which from its lonely bosom could launch a bolt big enough to rend the mountain or make the welkin ring again, if touched at every point by its trailing neighbours, if stranded

on the tree tops or the mountain side, soon loses all its lightning, drawn off in inconspicuous sparklets, and subsides into a feeble feathery innocent, a thin pale ghost of vapour. And so from isolated spirits, from those who, like Elijah, dwelt apart, or who, like Moses and David, lived alone amidst the multitude, from such vast self-contained, secluded spirits, men with whom their fellows could hold no converse, and who were thus shut up to exclusive fellowship with the Friend ever present and supreme; from such concentrated souls great bolts of prayer went up, or, like the fire of heaven, in some flashing word the long-gathered thought came down. But, and let us not be too severe on circumstances not absolutely evil, in days of much amenity, in a time like this when Christian companionship is no rarity, and when countless objects of beneficence give outlet to those better feelings which in severer or less busy times went back to God; in such a time devotional feeling is hardly permitted to accumulate sufficiently; the sacred fire is drawn off in driblets, and after our friends have got their share, and our neighbours theirs, and the public theirs, alas! there is little left, and instead of the whole soul going up to God in some heaven-rending ejaculation, it is all that our spent and diluted piety can do to appreciate, for we can hardly venture to repeat, the behest, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory."

Yet how it helps us, that is to say, how it at once exalts and humbles when we meet with genuine instances. I venture on a specimen. The author is hardly known, but he lived in the same parsonage once tenanted by the holy Herbert, and beneath the spire of Salisbury, and on those wide Wiltshire plains he walked with God, unnoticed and unknown. It is in words like these that the hidden life of Norris of Bemerton wells over: "My God, my happiness, who art as well the End as the Author of my being; who hast more perfection than I have desire, and who art truly willing to quench my great thirst in the ocean of Thy perfection; 'I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.' Withdraw Thy hand from the cleft of the rock, and remove the bounds from the mount of Thy presence, that I may see Thee as Thou art, face to face, and dwell for ever in the light of Thy beauty. I have long dwelt with vanity and emptiness, and have made myself weary in the pursuit of rest. O let me be taken up into the only Ark of repose and security, and let me see enough of Thyself to love Thee infinitely, to depend on Thee for my happiness entirely, and to bear up my spirit under the greatest aridities and dejections, with the delightful prospect of Thy glories. O let me sit down under this Thy shadow with great delight, till the fruit of the Tree of Life shall be sweet to my taste. Let me stay and entertain my longing soul

with the contemplation of Thy beauty, till Thou shalt bring me into Thy banqueting-house, where vision shall be the support of my spirit, and Thy banner over me shall be love. Grant this, O my God, for the sake of Thy great love, and of the Son of Thy love, Christ Jesus. Amen."[1] Words like these, who does not perceive that they are wings of a dove, and that the soul which sincerely can utter them is being wafted upon them by God's own Spirit to God's own heaven?

But who again, reverting to this context, can fail to see that God's glory is His goodness? Amongst astronomers it is a favourite speculation that the sun himself is something else than a mere ball of fire, and that inside of his burning atmosphere there may be a mighty globe with cool meadows, with seas of glass, and rivers clear as crystal, and with every conceivable provision for a vast and rejoicing population, the possible home of even the just made perfect. And even so, when forced near to God the guilty conscience feels as if it were forced forward towards a consuming fire—towards a holiness which hurts its love of sin,—towards a righteousness rectorial and retributive, which on all its evil radiates condemnation. And it is right, for "He will by no means clear the guilty." But within this light inaccessible, within this refulgent atmosphere of truth

[1] Norris's *Essays*, etc., p. 226.

and sanctity, is a glory more intimate and essential still, the inmost perfection and divinest beauty of the Godhead. Coming from within that light inaccessible, the only-begotten Son from the bosom of the Father declared what was there, and He declared that it is love,—a love which had sent Himself and which invited up into its blissful asylum every weary and sin-laden spirit. And so on this occasion, to the meek and wistful Moses preaching the gospel, Jehovah expanded that one word of love into the name, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin."

And those who know that name will put their trust in God, especially now when the saving clause or reservation has lost its ominous look, and lost it not by being spirited away, but by being signally fulfilled,—more signally fulfilled than if all the guilty had paid each and individually the personal penalty. And now that the Divine Representative has submitted to take your place, and be treated exactly as if the guilt were His, not yours,—and now that, in virtue of ample satisfaction rendered, that great Substitute is cleared,—now that Christ offers to include you in His full quittance, you may let the refracted rays return and unite again,—you may let this name proclaimed to Moses condense again into that name revealed by Jesus,—you may surrender to the joyful assurance that God is love,

that in Christ He is your Father and your God. The prayer is answered not to Moses only but to all of us, on whom these ends of the earth have come. God has showed His glory. Nay, the very "brightness of that glory" has come forth and dwelt among us. Bow the head and worship. Adore the Incarnate Mystery, and as you continue to commune with God manifest, your face will begin to shine. The gladness in your heart will illuminate your countenance, and both from reflected beauty and inward assimilation you will be changed into the same image, glorious as first it dawns and more glorious as it still proceeds.

XX.

The Lawgiver.

"And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"—Deut. iv. 8.

A modern jurist, a Frenchman and an infidel, observes, "Good right had Moses to challenge his Israelites, And what nation hath statutes like yours? a worship so exalted, laws so equitable, a code so complete? Compared with all the legislations of antiquity, none so thoroughly embodies the principles of everlasting and universal righteousness. Lycurgus wrote not for a people but for an army: it was a barrack which he erected, not a commonwealth; and sacrificing everything to the military spirit, he mutilated human nature in order to crush it into armour. Solon, on the contrary, could not resist the effeminate and relaxing influences of his Athens. It is in Moses alone that we find a regard for the right, austere and incorruptible,—a morality distinct from policy, and rising above regard for times and peoples. The trumpet of Sinai still finds

an echo in the conscience of mankind,—the Decalogue still binds us all."[1]

Did the merit belong to Moses, in the annals of legislation his would be the proudest of names, for never before nor since did a code spring into such sudden existence or conquer such tremendous difficulties. As it is, that name stands out in serene and saintly pre-eminence, as the meek self-merging medium through which Heaven conveyed to earth the choicest of mercies. "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"—Where it is beautiful to see how God gets all the glory, and Israel all the good; how, on the one hand, mingling himself with the mass of the nation, the man Moses, so very meek, he speaks of Jehovah as "*our* God,"—their God as much as his; and how, on the other hand, he tries to lift their hearts from the midst of their mercies to that God who gave them this mercy surpassing, statutes and judgments so righteous. Like a magnificent Alp, whose green skirts are the nest of a nation, and whose top white and glisten-

[1] *Législation Française*, par Hennequin, tom. i. 609.

ing, if terrestrial at all, is something transfigured, our lawgiver stands up in the horizon of history, not proud but pre-eminent—a halo round his head, and an emancipated people at his feet—claiming to himself no credit, but rejoicing in their happiness, and pointing to that high source from which it all comes down.

In order to understand the Mosaic legislation rightly, we must remember a distinction. The Israelites were to be a peculiar people. They existed not for themselves, but they had a function to fulfil towards all mankind, and, in order to fulfil this function, it was needful that they should be for a time a people separate and self-contained, singular in their usages and sequestered in their dwelling. In order to fix them down to one spot they had their local worship. It was a law that all the men amongst them should rendezvous at the central shrine three times a year, and thus foreign settlements or distant journeys were made impossible. The Hebrew home must be within a short and easy radius round the Temple, and if he went abroad he carried this tether, and was pulled back again by the Passover or some other pilgrimage. Then again to keep Israel distinct and immiscible, there were imposed upon him many rules and restrictions. If a stranger wished to settle in the Holy Land he must submit to circumcision; he must keep the

Sabbath; he must not bring with him, on pain of death, his idols or his own religious observances; and, on the other hand, if a Hebrew wished to roam, if on business or pleasure he went abroad, he must not adopt the usages of the people round him. He must not adopt their garb; he must not even wear his hair as they wore theirs; above all, he must not join them in their feasts or share their usual food, so that what with his peculiar garb and flowing beard, with his horror of things strangled, and with his long catalogue of unclean beasts, if the stranger found the Hebrew in the Holy Land a stiff and unaccommodating host, the Hebrew on his travels made himself a grotesque and inconvenient guest. And this was exactly what his law designed. It was intended to preserve him a personage peculiar in his own self-consciousness, and conspicuous in the eyes of others—the world's prophet and its priest till once his function was fulfilled—till that Divine personage had arrived who was "the end of the law," and, emancipated from meats and drinks and divers washings, men like Paul and Peter merged the Jew in the Christian and the Catholic, and, no longer calling anything common or unclean, found in every clime a country and in every saint a living temple.

Whilst some laws were designed on purpose to make the Jew peculiar, in reading others we must

bear in mind how imperfect were the people to whom they were originally addressed. There might have been better laws, as we are apt to imagine, throwing backward our New Testament light, but they were the best that the people could bear. A wise lawgiver has regard to the powers and to the prejudices of the people for whom he is legislating, and will not lay on them burdens greater than they have strength to carry. He will take into account their climate, their prevailing pursuits and callings, their previous training, the present state of religion and morals, and whilst it will be his object to help them up to a higher level, he will not make the steps of the ascent so cyclopean that none but giants can climb. Thus the law of Moses allowed certain forms of slavery, and it forbade the taking interest for money. It allowed a man, in certain cases, to have more wives than one, and it gave facilities for divorcement, which, in the words of the Saviour, showed great "hardness of heart,"—a bluntness of feeling and coarseness of sentiment such as could not have been "in the beginning," and such as cannot well exist under the refining influence of the gospel.

At the same time, there are in this Mosaic code many traits and touches which anticipate the higher tone and tenderness of a later dispensation. "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray,

thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him; thou shalt surely help with him."[1] What could be more disarming, what more likely to electrify an enemy into sudden subjugation! what finer conquest over one's-self, for the first impulse is to glory over the perplexity of an opponent; but although revenge would fain "forbear to help," religion says, Thou shalt surely succour. "Rise up before the hoary head."[2] A ruffian race, mere warriors and free-booters, despise and dislike the old, for they can fight no longer; but it needs some sentiment and some homage to worth and wisdom to recognise in the hoary head a crown of glory. Then again, how many of these laws are marked by a considerate humanity! "If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down. It is his only covering; wherein shall he sleep?"[3] "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. Neither shalt thou glean every grape of thy vineyard: thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the Lord."[4] And the same kindness which thinks of the poor and

[1] Ex. xxiii. 4, 5.
[2] Lev. xix. 32.
[3] Ex. xxii. 26.
[4] Lev. xix. 9, 10.

provides for them from the superabundance of the rich, extends its regards to the lower forms of life. "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn." "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree or on the ground, and the dam sitting upon the eggs or upon the young, thou shalt not take the mother-bird with the young: thou shalt in any wise let the dam go free, and take the young to thee."[1]

On the laws of Moses we shall not enter further; but they will repay the study of those who have taste and leisure for such investigations. They will repay the historian, for they will introduce him to a civilisation compared with which the Grecian culture and the Roman commonwealth are but of yesterday. They will repay the scholar, for in Moses, with his monotheism,—in Moses, with his sublime cosmogony,—in Moses, with his laws so protective to the poor and so equitable towards every citizen, he will find some of the sublimest things in Plato's philosophy, and some of the wisest, humanest things in Plato's imaginary Republic. They will repay the jurist, for in the deodands and compensations, the doctrine of trespass and damage and malice prepense laid down by the Hebrew lawgiver, he will find the origin or earnest of much in our own British statute-book. And they will

[1] Deut. xxii. 6.

repay every student of morals and of mankind, for, as has been truly remarked, "Thoughts colonize as well as races. Ideas, like families, have a genealogy and a propagation;"[1] and in tracing the migrations of thought from land to land, in following up these spiritual migrations, there is many a great idea of which we do not find the birthplace till we reach the Books of Moses, many a notion which has widely influenced mankind, and which is still wielding over the world a powerful sway, of which we shall not find the germ or principle till we reach this cradle of all codes,—this book of all beginnings.

[1] Wines' *Commentaries*, p. 103.

XXI.

The Water of Meribah.

"Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there," etc.—NUMB. xx. 1-12.

FOR the first two years after leaving Egypt the career of Israel, and consequently of Moses, was full of incidents. The Red Sea was crossed, Sinai was reached, the Law was given, the Tabernacle was set up, and that economy was established by which for the next three thousand years a peculiar people was destined to be known and distinguished. And there was at one time every appearance as if, before the second year had expired, the favoured and Heaven-protected nation would be comfortably settled in their promised land. They were already near it, so near that a few days more might have carried them into the midst of it, had they not been arrested by their own incapacity and unworthiness. A deputation of their number had been sent to explore the country. They came back with a

glowing account of its climate and its produce, "it flowed with milk and honey, and here is a cluster of its grapes;" but like the golden apples guarded by the dragon, it was a treasure which could not be touched; the people were such giants and their garrisons so impregnable that it was mere madness to attempt an invasion. It was to no purpose that Joshua and Caleb protested. They did not deny that the Canaanites were tall, and their castles strong; but "the Lord is with us," and "if He delight in us, it is an exceeding good land, and He will give it us." The contagion of dismay had overspread the multitude; a cry was raised to choose a new commander, and hasten back to Egypt; and Joshua and Caleb were warned that it was as much as their lives were worth if they spoke another word.

It was a sad outburst of cowardice and childishness—a whole army blubbering at the prospect of a battle: "All the congregation lifted up their voice and cried; and the people wept that night." To men of mettle like Joshua, to men of sense and spirit, it was mortifying to hear them like babies, crying, "Take us back to Egypt," forgetful of all the horrors of the house of bondage. And to men of God, like Aaron and his brother, it was still more distressing to see how, at each new danger, they lost all memory of past deliverance. and could

only believe in God for the moment when His arm of might was actually made manifest. Altogether, it was a discouraging revelation, and it seemed to indicate that an abject, servile spirit on the one hand, and a great perversity on the other, were too deeply engrained to be ever pounded out, seeing that they had survived thirty-eight years of discipline and training in the heart of that desert, and seeing that on the very first trial the new race broke down in the same way with their fathers; and in view of all the provocation, we who are but flesh and blood are apt to say that Moses did well to be angry.

Angry he certainly was; and when, reverting to a former miracle, the Most High directed him to take the wonder-staff—his rod of many miracles—and at the head of the congregation "speak to the rock," and it would "give forth its water," in the heat and agitation of his spirit he failed to implement implicitly the Divine command. Instead of speaking to the rock he spoke to the people, and his harangue was no longer in the language calm and dignified of the lawgiver, but had a certain tone of petulance and egotism: "Here now, ye rebels; must we"—must I and Aaron, not must Jehovah —"fetch you water out of this rock?" And instead of simply *speaking* to it, he raised the rod and dealt it two successive strokes, just as if the rock were

sharing the general perversity, and would no more than the people obey its Creator's bidding. He was angry and he sinned. He sinned and was severely punished. Water flowed sufficient for the whole camp and the cattle, clear, cool, and eagerly gushing, enough for all the million; but at the same moment that its unmerited bounty burst on you, ye rebels, "a cup of wrath was put into the hand of Moses."[1] To you, ye murmurers, there came forth living water; to your venerable leaders the cup of God's anger. "The Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them."

How severe the sentence! and how inclined we are to sympathize with those good and much-enduring men who, at the very end of their task, and on the very edge of the Promised Land, saw vanish from their grasp the blessing which they had never once forfeited all these forty years! But the Judge of all the earth must do right, and we cannot help inquiring, "What was the precise offence which was so instantly and inexorably punished?"

The usual answer and the most obvious is, that Moses lost his temper. And the fact cannot be controverted. As we read in Psalm cvi.,

[1] Van Oosterzee, p. 213.

"They provoked the spirit of Moses, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips." And on the face of the narrative we see abundant signs of wrath and perturbation. But was Moses the only person then present whose frame of mind was not what it ought to be? Was not the whole multitude in a buzz of hot and angry murmuring? Had they not passed the night in petulant complaints and infantile lamentations? and, the day before, had they not threatened to stone Caleb with stones? We fear that there were few good tempers that morning; and if every man had borne his own iniquity, we fear that few of that company would have gone forward from Meribah, or even survived to drink its living water. What was it then? Along with his temper what else had Moses lost? or what was there in an act outwardly so trivial which made it "a great transgression"?

In order to arrive at a reply we must revert to the words of Jehovah: "The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because *ye believed me not*, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore," etc. Here there is nothing expressly directed against their temper or spirit; but they are charged with unbelief. If their temper had failed, the saddest effect was that their faith had also failed; and, allowing their mind to be thrown off the balance, their faith shared the general unhinge-

ment. In the dust and smoke of combat, men not only get dim and distorted views of their fellows, but the serene sky overhead grows darkened; and this unexpected outbreak of the Israelites, whilst it took Moses and Aaron by surprise, for the instant went far to make even these good men faithless or forgetful. "Has Jehovah's purpose been defeated? Has all this weariful detention failed of its design in weeding out the murmurers and preparing the people for the promised rest? And owing to this miserable outbreak must Aaron and I make up our minds to forty more years in the desert?" And just as happened with Jonah, who let out his spite upon the gourd, but who was really angry with Nineveh for repenting, and angry with God for sparing it; and just as happens with most people when they get into a passion, Moses wreaked his anger on the people and on the rock, but he was not altogether pleased with God Himself. For once he disobeyed his Master's orders, and instead of doing exactly as the Lord commanded, he did what he thought should do as well, and instead of the simple and sublime instructions he had received, he substituted an unwarranted and undignified procedure of his own. For the moment he himself was unmindful of the Rock of his salvation, and from not believing made too much haste.

To use the words of one who thought profoundly

and whose every word was weighty,—Dr. Robert Gordon,—"Perhaps Moses and Aaron doubted whether it were enough simply to speak to the rock, and whether it would not be necessary not only to smite it, as on a former occasion Moses had been instructed to do, but to smite it twice. If so, then it was a distrust of God's power—a doubt whether the rock would give forth water at the Divine bidding unaccompanied with the smiting of Moses, which formed no part of his present commission. If so, the rebuke which followed is full of instruction to all subsequent times. That rock was one of the most significant types of Christ with which the Old Testament church was supplied. As that rock was once smitten with the rod of Moses, Israel's lawgiver, so it behoved Christ the antitype to be smitten once, but only once, with the rod of the great Lawgiver, that He might vindicate the law and make it honourable. When Moses therefore smote the rock again, and twice too, not only without authority, but in opposition to the Divine command,—for he was commanded to speak to it,—he marred the beauty of that type whereby the perfection of Christ's one sacrifice was so clearly set forth; and the rebuke which he and Aaron incurred does most emphatically condemn the presumption of those who would add to Christ's one offering of Himself, either by works of self-right-

eousness, or by the frequent offering of what they call His body and blood in the idolatrous sacrifice of the mass. The divine influence which Christ by His Spirit imparts to His Church may, for the chastisement of the Church, appear for a season to be dried up, as the rock in the wilderness did for a time withhold its water from the thirsty Israelites. But in order to give forth to His people the water of life Christ needs not to be smitten again either in reality or in figure. He has only to be 'spoken to' in the prayer of faith, founded on the warrant of God's Word; and whether such prayer proceed from the individual believer in his humble cottage, or from a united Church in her collective capacity, it will not fail to draw down those communications of His grace, even the quickening influences of His Spirit, whereby He refreshes His inheritance when it is weary."[1]

May we not go a little further? What was Moses, what was Aaron? You reply, The one was the prince and prophet, the leader and lawgiver of Israel; the other was Israel's priest. True; but on whose behalf—by whom appointed, whom representing? You answer, God. That is to say, each was in a certain sense a mediator. Each stood there so far representing God and communicating with Him and with Israel—the one mainly as prophet or

[1] Gordon's *Christ in the Old Testament*, vol. ii. pp. 95, 96.

revealer of His mind,—the other mainly as priest or reconciler for the sins of the people. For such a function the first essential was unison with God; the next, and hardly the next, for included in the former, compassion on the ignorant and wayward. In a dispensation itself mainly gracious, and foreshadowing one which would be grace altogether, it was of prime importance that the mediating men should be men merciful and gracious, long-suffering and slow to anger. And such they were in marvellous measure. The man Moses was exceeding meek, and if for patience and a sweet submissiveness the palm had been assigned to any one besides, it would have been to Aaron his brother. But after all they were human. Their endurance was wonderful, but it was not inexhaustible; and on this occasion, instead of hastening in betwixt an infatuated people and the God against whom they murmured, and crying, "Pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of Thy mercy," when it turned out that God had this time pardoned already, and was about to give them good for their evil,—instead of faithfully exhibiting the Divine munificence and calmly asking the rock for its water, they (so to speak) defeated the Divine generosity, and failing to sympathize with God's forgivingness, He was not "sanctified in the eyes of the children of Israel." The final start for Canaan was

marked, like every previous stage, by murmurs; but remembering that they were but flesh, the Lord would not deal with them after their sins, nor reward them according to their iniquities. No fire came forth, no chasm opened; but "all was mercy, all was mild," and, condoning their complaints, the gift they needed was about to be conferred on the rebellious. But to this effort of long-suffering and loving-kindness the chafed spirit of Moses and Aaron was unequal. By the way they managed it they spoiled the moral glory of the miracle, and what on God's side was a gift of pure grace, under their hard blows and hot words assumed the aspect of an angry gospel. They believed Him not, to sanctify Him in the eyes of the children of Israel.

Brimming over with instruction as is this passage, we must leave it with a few remarks.

1. How careful preachers of the gospel and expounders of Scripture should be not to give an erroneous impression of God's mind or message. The mental acumen is rare, but the right spirit is rarer. But what is the right spirit?—A loving spirit, a gentle spirit, a faithful spirit, a meek and weaned spirit, a spirit which says, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," and a spirit which adds, "All that the Lord giveth me, that will I speak," that excellent spirit which is only imparted by the good Spirit of God. For if He withdraw, even a Moses

ceases to be meek, and ceasing to be meek even a Moses becomes a bad divine and an erroneous teacher, striking the rock that has been already stricken once for all, and preaching glad tidings gruffly. He who gives the living water does not grudge it; but sometimes, instead of "Ho! every one that thirsteth," the preacher says, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" and makes the very invitation repulsive.

2. When any one has run long and run well, how sad it is to stumble within a few steps of the goal! If Moses had an earthly wish, it was to see Israel safe in their inheritance. And his wish was all but consummated. Faith and patience had held out well-nigh forty years, and in a few months more the Jordan would be crossed and the work would be finished. And who can tell but this very nearness of the prize helped to create something of a presumptuous confidence? The blood of Moses was hot to begin with, and he was not the meekest of men when he smote the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. But he had got a good lesson in ruling his spirit, and betwixt the long sojourn with Jethro and the self-discipline needful in the charge of this multitude, he might fancy that he had now his foot on the neck of this enemy: when lo! the sin revives and Moses dies.

Blessed is the man that feareth alway! Blessed

is the man who, although years have passed without an attempt at burglary, still bars his doors and sees his windows fastened! Blessed is the man who, although a generation has gone since the last eruption, forbears to build on the volcanic soil, and dreads fires which have smouldered for fourscore years! Blessed is the man who, even when the high seas are crossed and the land is made, still keeps an outlook! Blessed is the man who, even on the confines of Canaan, takes heed of the evil heart, lest, with a promise of entering in, he should come short through unbelief!

3. Elevation of mind and sweetness of spirit are pearls of great price, and if we wish to preserve them we had better intrust them to God's own keeping. If Moses lost his faith, it was by first losing self-command; and if a man lose this, it is hard to say what next he may lose: like the mad warrior who makes a missile of his shield and hurls it at the head of an enemy, he is henceforward open to every fiery dart, to the cut and thrust of every assailant. But, as John Newton remarks, "the grace of God is as necessary to create a right temper in a Christian on the breaking of a china plate as on the death of an only son;" and as no man can tell on any dawning day but what that may be the most trying day in all his life, how wise to pray without ceasing, "Uphold me according unto Thy word.

Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: keep the door of my lips." "Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression"

XXII.

The Hermit Nation.

"For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations."—NUMB. XXIII. 9.

As long as its channel is rock there is no fear for the river. There is no risk that its volume will lessen, or that it will fail to reach its terminus, although the ocean should be a thousand miles distant. But if in its progress it is met by a sandy desert, what is it to do? This Sahara will engulf it, and although it were another Nile, this sultry monster is able to devour it every drop, and cheat the thirsty regions beyond.

The first ages of the world had no lack of revelation. For a thousand years they retained Adam, rich in the recollections of Paradise, and from time to time men rose up like Enoch the prophet and Noah the preacher of righteousness—men who revived forgotten truth or faded piety, and who added new elements to the pre-existing knowledge; and

from all the probabilities of the case, we do not doubt that not only was there communion with God and with one another among the members of the little church which survived in the ark, but there is every evidence that it was a pure and ample creed which emerged from that floating tabernacle—a creed which recognised the unity, the spirituality, the truth and holiness of God; which kept sacred one day in seven; which looked for a seed of the woman who should be deliverer and restorer of humanity; and which retained the practice and the doctrine of sacrifice.

In all likelihood Noah's creed was much more minute and comprehensive than this, but it is a great matter to know that all this was included. It is a great matter to know that four thousand years ago there was a church catholic—a church within which there were no schismatics, as there were no separatists without—a church unanimous in worshipping, without any idolatrous intermedium, the King eternal, immortal, and invisible—a church which lived in the hope of redemption—a church which kept holy the Sabbath, and which solemnized its signal deliverance and sanctified its new abode by that great holocaust of Ararat.

But it is sad to see how soon this primeval and catholic creed got corrupted. Men did not lose it entirely, but they so depraved and distorted it that

its features could scarcely be identified. Instead of worshipping the unseen all-seeing Creator, they chose His brightest creature, and, like the ancient Persians, became worshippers of the fire or the sun; or they put together rude emblems of wisdom, swiftness, and strength,—the head of a man, the wings of an eagle, the legs of an ox or a lion, and, like the old Assyrians, at last bowed down and worshipped their carved or molten symbol. The Sabbath faintly survived in the traditions of all lands, and the coming Redeemer was travestied in the incarnations of Bramah and Vishnu, whilst a device of His advent may be perceived, more or less faintly, in the musings of Plato, in the sighs of Socrates, and in Virgil's beautiful vision. But the true doctrine of sacrifice soon got divorced from the practice, and, losing sight of the Lamb of God who should take away the sin of the world, the descendants of Noah found poor consolation in that blood of bulls and goats which can never cancel transgression. With most of them the offering became a mere bribe to the Deity, the price of some favour which they wished to procure; and those who retained the idea of a vicarious atonement, like the earlier Greeks, and like the Phœnicians, the predecessors of the Jews in Palestine, by way of adding value to the victim, and rendering it actually life for life, they outraged Heaven's Majesty by the slaughter of a

human sacrifice, and by giving the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul.

Dark and dreadful as some of these systems were, it must not be forgotten that they were perversions of an original truth. When that coin came from the mint its milled edges were sharp, its image and inscription stood out, and its lustre was spotless. But now that it has passed through ten thousand hands, wantonly defaced by some and inevitably worn by others, it has thinned down into a mere glittering scale, a blank unmeaning counter; or you drop it into the sea, and years afterwards, at the same spot, you dredge up a curious conglomerate, a mass of pebbles, shells, and sand, all aggregated round a black and rusty nucleus; and it is only by dint of assiduous polishing, or by the use of some chemical re-agent, that you recognise your lost piece of silver. As the world's second father received the truth from God, it was all in Heaven's own currency, full weight and without a flaw, and what would have been accepted in the Great King's assay. But as soon as it began to circulate it began to deteriorate. Some truths simply wore out. The Sabbath, for example, soon ceasing to be a day of rest and religion, thinned off into a mere nonentity; and although most nations deemed seven a sacred number, and counted time by weeks of seven days, they could give no right reason for the usage. But

most truths get tarnished and corroded. Consigned to no written record, when intrusted to the memory of man, with all his prejudices and bad propensities, they were like shillings dropt into the tide. When next you see them you can hardly recognise them, crusted over with such uncouth or monstrous additions, and changed into a substance so remote from the bright original. This black mass, slippery with weeds and crawling with sea-worms, who could conceive that it was hiding in its heart a shekel of the sanctuary? And even when you get at the nucleus, it is so damaged and decomposed that you feel it is now good for nothing; it must be cast into the furnace and melted anew before it will be accepted as precious metal again. And just so, when we dredge into the sea of ancient history, or when we dive into the dark places of the present day, and bring up some ugly superstition, it is hard to believe, and yet it is often true, that its core is one of these old Noachian coins; and although man's tradition has so corrupted God's saying as to give it the aspect and effect of an impious falsehood, even under that falsehood may be detected a trace of the primitive truth. "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and, making corruptible images of the incorruptible

God, they changed his truth into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator. And as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." When, as in the days of the post-diluvian patriarchs, they possessed the knowledge, they lacked the piety, and for want of the piety they soon lost the knowledge. "Their foolish heart was darkened." But still, for all their first germs of knowledge they were indebted to God's own teaching. Their most horrible superstition was a truth of God, which they had "changed into a lie;" and as the beginning of idolatry we recognise the abuse of symbols and the depravation of a theology originally true; and at the basis of every sacrifice, however mercenary in its spirit, and however offensive in its mode, we recognise a reminiscence, distant and distorted no doubt, but still a reminiscence, of what was in the beginning a Divine institution. In other words, the fragments of truth which have come down in the heathen religions are relics of the primeval and universal religion which issued from the ark with Noah, and with that Church of which Noah was the pastor and the priest; and just as we call Popery a corruption of Christianity, so may we call Paganism a corruption of Patriarchism—a perversion of the primitive and catholic religion.

Or, to revert to the comparison which we made at

the beginning: from Ararat there flowed a stream of revelation fresh and pure, and had the channel been retentive, had men's hearts been honest, and had they liked to retain God's truth in their knowledge, that stream might have come down to the era of the Advent pellucid and ample, and making wise unto salvation the successive ages as it passed. But as its course extended it was soon perceived that its volume was lessening and its contents were corrupting. It was not merely as if it had come to a sultry desert where it was likely to disappear in the burning sand; but it had reached a swampy wilderness, where it was sure to merge in the brackishness and noisomeness of the festering ooze, and retain no token of that gladsome river which took its rise at Noah's altar and beneath the rainbow of God's covenant. It pleased the Most High to obviate this disaster. By narrowing the channel He saved the stream. He no longer left the conservation of His truth to the world at large; but He selected a people and set up a system which should place the great saving doctrines beyond the casualties of time and the caprice of changing generations. He segregated from all the families of the earth the line of faithful Abraham, and He set up that peculiar institution which is known as the Levitical Economy, or Mosaic Dispensation.

Precisely as before the flood, all flesh were again

corrupting their way, and there was every danger that true religion would utterly expire. If left any longer to the memory of mankind at large, it was plain that the promise of a Saviour and the true doctrine of sacrifice, and Sabbath-keeping, and the knowledge of God's perfections, would soon be extinct. And whilst there was still a godly remnant, the Most High chose out a specific depository for the all-important revelation. So to speak, He formed a canal or aqueduct along which the stream might be conducted safe from the irruption of the bitter and offensive fen on either side. And although, with its straight and monotonous banks and unvarying width, the canal is not so picturesque as the free meandering river, in such a case it is the only security. He not only took the new method of confiding His precepts and promises to a written record—the tables of stone and the book of the covenant, but He had recourse to an additional precaution, and these lively oracles thus written down He intrusted to a *peculiar people.* The very existence of that people as a nation he bound up with the preservation of these records, and thus secured in His wisdom a twofold guarantee for their unimpaired transmission. It was as if the engineer of our artificial river had intrusted its embankments to some special clan whom he appointed its guardians, so contriving it that if through their fault any

breach were committed their own supply should be cut off or their own fields should be flooded. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say, that for His revelation God provided a twofold receptacle: writing it in letters of ink on the Hebrew Bible, and in indelible usages and unaltering ideas inscribing it on the Hebrew people. It was a concentric channel: within, the tables of stone compactly joined together; without, the concrete, almost as impervious, of a nationality the most tenacious and cohesive which our world has ever witnessed,—the living network of willows by the water-courses, whose fond branches skim the glassy current, whilst their wattled rootlets guard and cradle the bed in which that current flows.

With their precious deposit of a revelation at once written and ritual, it was the purpose of God that the people should "dwell alone," and not be mingled with the nations; and with this design He made it difficult for them to go far from home, and at the same time inconvenient and distasteful to associate with strangers. It was not only by depriving them of horses and giving them no instinct for the ocean, that the Divine Lawgiver confined them to their own country; but, by appointing festivals which required their attendance in the capital three times a year, He rendered long journeys all but impossible. On the other hand, by prescribing rules as to their daily

life,—rules of singular minuteness as to things which they must not taste, nor touch, nor handle,—He made it a problem full of anxiety and peril to travel among their heathen neighbours or to have their heathen neighbours sojourning with them. And altogether, betwixt that short cable which kept them moored to the Temple, and that regimen which made them and the rest of the world so ungainly if not odious to one another, He secured for this singular people a seclusion almost as absolute as if they had been transported to some island in a distant sea.

Thus isolated, shut up in the calm enclosure of their Holy Land, the Most High commenced that series of lessons by which He educated the pupil nation up to the proper point for appreciating Messiah when He came, and on the strength of which her more proficient scholars were destined to become the recipients of the final revelation and the first heralds of God's mercies to mankind. But without stretching away into a theme so vast as is that anomalous Hebrew history, our present object is to see the precise relation which that Hebrew system bears to its patriarchal predecessor. And if we do not greatly err, it may, as already hinted, be described as a reservoir or artificial channel, in which the remains of patriarchal theology were conserved, and in which provision was made for the reception and transmission of all the intermediate

revelation which Jehovah might vouchsafe till the Word should be made flesh, and grace and truth should come in Jesus Christ.

What all remained of the patriarchal or primeval theology, it is vain to conjecture: but all that remained, we may safely assert, was absorbed into the new dispensation. For if we found a Sabbath in Paradise, and signs of a Sabbath in the Ark, and if we find in the readiness with which it was recognised in the wilderness that it had not been absolutely forgotten in the brick-kilns of Egypt, this patriarchal Sabbath was adopted and sanctioned as one of the most prominent features in the Hebrew economy. If we found graciously given to the exiles of Eden the promise of a Saviour, under the name of Shiloh, and the prophet like unto Moses, and the root and offspring of David, we find the promise repeated and restricted till the Desire of the World became the hope and the proud prospect of Israel. If our first father knew the Father of Spirits in the awe of His justice as well as the endearment of His mercy, and if the world's second father saw the Divine perfections diffracted, as in yonder symbolic bow, in the various tints of vengeance, patience, pity, the founder of that new dispensation saw the scattered rays again united in the white focus of the burning bush, and in the name, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, yet by no

means clearing the guilty," received a presentiment of the great gospel announcement, "God is love." And if substitution and expiation by sacrifice are as ancient as the world before the flood, we find the principle assumed and the practice systematized, codified, reduced to a rubric, in the statute-book of Israel, and the precedents of Abel, Noah, and Melchisedec, carried out in the priesthood of Levi, and in those altars which did not cease to smoke for fifteen centuries.

And yet, although so much of the old patriarchal revelation was restored or preserved in the Hebrew economy, the knowledge of God, access to Him through mediation, the hope of a Redeemer, sacrifice, and Sabbath-keeping,—in other words, although Judaism was in one respect a reform from Paganism and a return to the pure and primitive Patriarchism (as Protestantism is a reform from Popery, and a return to pure and primitive apostolism), it must not be forgotten that in all its outward form and figure it was a very different system; and could an Abel or an Enoch have made the direct transition from the palmy days of the patriarchal piety to the era of the Aaronic priesthood, he might have felt it a change from liberty to bondage, and from sunshine to clouds and shadows. And even although the actual transition was from an old dispensation's twilight to a new one's dawn, and

from the vagueness and uncertainty of decaying tradition to the precision and permanence of a written revelation, so narrow was the range, so strict the rubric, and so stern the threatenings of the new economy, that, looking back to that incident in the childhood of the Church of God, we feel as if it then had quitted the lap of a nursing mother to be under the bondage of a schoolmaster. Its first salutation,—one which the wild and wayward scholar greatly needed, but still a salutation harsh and startling,—was in the hoarse thunder of Sinai, and its first lesson a severer ordeal than Pythagoras imposed on his pupils, a novitiate of forty years' silence, a probation not of forty days but of forty years, in which one murmuring word would be fatal. And the task which was prescribed, and which it took a thousand years to learn, was enforced by so many pains and penalties, and truant moments were visited by corrections so severe, that after ages of so strict a monitor we do not wonder that it was felt a joyful emancipation when Jesus stretched out His hands and said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" we do not wonder that in exchanging Moses for Messiah those who made the trial declared His yoke to be easy and His burden light.

XXIII.

The Hermit Nation.

"For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations."—NUMB. xxiii. 9.

IN last Lecture we saw how the Patriarchal passed into the Hebrew dispensation. It was needful to narrow the channel in order to save the stream. For our present purpose we do not require to ask, What became of the residue? What became of those little rills which were not included in the great artificial canal, but which were allowed to run off into the great expanse of humanity? It is an interesting inquiry, and justice has hardly been done it. Too frequently, and in forgetfulness of what the Bible tells, it has been assumed that the whole of that primeval revelation evaporated and left no trace. But although the trace may be minute or the stream may be muddy, there is nevertheless an appreciable tincture of primeval truth in almost all the religions of Paganism. It may not be sufficient to make men better; nay, like that pure element which carries

health and exhilaration in its free and open current, but which in its stagnant overflow converts into a pestilent swamp what before was but a barren wilderness, the corruption of a truth may be more offensive and more deadly than simple ignorance, yet still they are not without significance, those vestiges of primeval verity. What means this tradition, so prevailing, of a golden age that was, this longing, so universal, for a better time not seen as yet? Whence this dark discomfort, this conscience of sin, this dreary feeling that God and man are disagreed, and whence this general effort to get anew into a right relation? those peace-offerings and vows and sacrifices which confess transgression, and plead for pardon and for mercies otherwise unmerited? Are they not the relics of a better religion that once existed? a few fragments, rusty and corroded perhaps, of that earlier truth which in Noah's ark was transported from the old world to the new?—so many little pools or runnels which in their choked and struggling course are still derived from the fountain which started so clear and strong on Ararat?

But for the present we take leave of this primeval and catholic revelation, with its fast-disappearing and corrupting remains. We need not even discuss the question how far it was possible for the Gentiles to come to the saving knowledge of God with the light

that in some places lingered after the Mosaic dispensation was established. Our business now lies with that little country which, for fifteen centuries, was the Goshen of the earth; the one illumined region in a world whose spiritual gloom was deepening age by age, till at last it had become a darkness that might be felt. We are to contemplate that system which at first sight is to many of us cumbrous and uncouth, but which, on nearer inspection, we shall find, like the other works of Jehovah, a masterpiece of wisdom wonderful.

And looking at Judaism, the first thing that strikes us is its local limitation. Here is a little spot of 10,000 square miles,[1] about one five-thousandth part of the globe's terrestrial surface, or a fifth of England's area; and in this little nook we find locked up the peculiar people, the privileged possessors of the only authentic religion, the exclusive guardians of the one Divine revelation. The people dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the nations. And it is not only that their territory is small, for, like the eagle whose home is a crag, but whose hunting field is the entire domain of ocean, earth, and air, Macedonia, Carthage, and Rome nestled on a narrow ledge, but made the flap of their pinions heard afar; but, with the fire of ambition blazing in his eye, Israel is an eagle whose

[1] The area of the Holy Land was about 10,000 square miles. The terrestrial area of the globe is upwards of 48,000,000 of square miles.

wings have been shorn. Without horses, without a navy, without the talent for conquest or command, he is forced to tarry at home; and religion requires what Providence indicates: for he must not lose sight of the Temple, he must not mingle among strangers, whose very touch is defilement, he must not lodge in their tainted dwellings nor sit down at their idolatrous boards. And therefore, only known to his neighbours for his strange unsocial ways, he dwells apart, like the cony of his own over-shadowing Lebanon, a hermit nation, a mysterious recluse, a sequestered and separate community, building his houses on the rock, and chiefly protected by his isolation. Of purpose. Such was the design of the Most High. He desired to isolate the people. To intrust the forthcoming revelation to the world at large would have been to lose it, but to secure its conservation He prepared a place and a people. That revelation should not again be water spilt upon the ground, but, collected into this reservoir, it should be guarded with religious care by a race who knew that their national existence was bound up with its integrity, and who, instead of courting foreign alliances or aspiring to imperial dominion, felt that they had a mission still more august, and that, as custodiers of God's oracles, and guardians of His temple, they had a distinction above all the peoples that dwell on the face of the earth.

Hence everything was done to keep them at home, and to keep them separate. Hence was it that a dietary was prescribed which made the Hebrew a troublesome guest and an uneasy traveller in the land of the Gentiles. Hence was it that his means of locomotion were taken away, and that a few days' radius from the Temple became the necessary limit of Hebrew homes. Hence was it that the heart of the Jew was taught to cling with a tremendous tenacity to his Holy Land, till exile became the sorest of judgments, and a grave in the sacred soil was deemed almost essential to a joyful resurrection.

But looking again at Judaism, we are struck with the minuteness of its rubric and the rigidity of its ritual. Not only was the isolation of the peculiar people a great contrast to the catholic patriarchism which went before, and to the world-embracing gospel which followed; but their singular system was a striking antithesis to the law of liberty which marked primeval and apostolic times. With the Jew, religion was itself a business. Almost every movement was fettered by certain rules and prescriptions, and it required much circumspection to pass unscathed through a single day. To take the most obvious example: Our Lord has taught Christians to eat whatever is set before them, thanking God, and asking no questions; and the meal is now religious if he who partakes it eats and drinks to

the glory of God. But in order to be a safe meal to the Hebrew, it was needful that the viands should be of a certain description, and that they should be prepared according to a certain formula. On particular days it would have been a trespass to eat bread with leaven, and on any day it would have been a serious offence to partake of delicacies much prized among the neighbouring nations: so that the Shadrachs and Meshachs, the truly conscientious, were sometimes constrained to send away untasted dainties from a royal feast, and appease their hunger with pulse and lentils. And even after every precaution had been observed, although it was known that the viands were all authorized and properly prepared, various accidents might mar the meal and disperse the famished group from around the polluted table. And then if, all his circumspection notwithstanding, the Israelite were betrayed into some transgression, it was both a laborious and expensive ordeal to expiate the offence and eliminate its consequences. There was the bathing, and there was the costly sacrifice, and there was the exclusion from the society of one's friends, so irksome, and often so inopportune. And in order to have some idea of the Hebrew's trammelled life, we have only to read their great directory, Leviticus, which, with its meats and drinks and divers washings and carnal ordinances, still stands upon the

record to teach us, among other lessons, from what a yoke of bondage the Saviour has set His people free. It was a burdensome institute; but there was a meaning in its very burdensomeness. No doubt, to many its very chains grew golden, and its yoke became a proud badge of distinction; and as if its fetters were not sufficiently felt, the later Jews busied themselves in contriving new prohibitions and in multiplying ritual minutiæ. Still, to the freer spirits of that legal economy, especially when it was waxing old and ready to vanish away, there was an irksome restraint in its ceremonial routine and punctilious regulations; and, like the winged creature developing within the crust of the creeping thing, they panted for larger fields and a higher flight. They groaned and travailed till the Son of God was manifest; and when at the resurrection-word, "Loose him and let him go," the cerements burst and the grave-clothes fell off, it was with an exulting shout that Pauline spirits hailed the liberty wherewith Christ had made His people free, and refused to be again entangled with the yoke of bondage.

In its limited locality, and in its punctilious ritual, Judaism differed from both the Patriarchism which preceded it and the Christianity which followed. For fifteen centuries Jerusalem was the focus of all light, the magnet of all piety, the one

place for acceptable worship. And during all that period the Levitical code was binding,—a code so difficult that few could observe it except those born and brought up under it, and who had for its details something of a hereditary instinct.

But if in these respects Judaism was unique, when we look at it again we observe one feature in which it closely resembled the dispensation that followed, and that is, in the possession of a *written revelation.* It had now been ascertained that the true faith could not be kept alive by tradition. Man's memory was too treacherous to be intrusted with a matter so distasteful to his fallen spirit as the true character of God; and even where there was a traditional theology, like the stream which flows through many soils, and which takes a bitter taste from one and a dusky tint from another, in its transmission from race to race it was found that the oral revelation grew dark and offensive. In this stagnant swamp, weltering with reptiles and fuming with pestilence, who can recognise the stream which bounded from the Alpine crag, pure as the melted snow and salubrious as Heaven's own precipitate? And in these Gentile religions, all alive with hideous pagods and deadly with abominable idolatries, who could believe that this is what man has made of that Revelation which started on its course from Ararat so clear and pellucid? But by consigning it

to a written record, the Most High took care that, uncorrupted and undiminished, His oracles should continue lively to the last; and He made it at once the duty and the distinction of the Jews that to them these oracles were committed: their distinction to have a treasure so unique confided to their keeping, their duty to preserve it unimpaired. Ages of ignorance or error might intervene; but here in the volume of the Book was the well of wisdom undefiled, and though a thousand years might have passed away since the thunders of Sinai fell silent, here evermore the worshipper who prays, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory," sees God's stately goings and hears that very Name which was proclaimed unto Moses; and although it has wandered many a sultry mile since it left the heights of Zion, though to reach these willows of Babylon it has had to cross a weary desert, this is the very brook from which the panting Psalmist drank, at which the soul, thirsting for God, the living God, now drinks and is refreshed.

The pre-eminence of a written revelation is unspeakable. It is a permanent provision not only for the satisfying of every longing soul, but for the constant reviving of the Church. When, like Patriarchism, a traditional revelation has once grown turbid, man possesses no filter which can clarify it again; but written down, however bad the

times may grow, the book preserves it pure and limpid to the last. And like the Wycliffes and Luthers of the Christian time, when the Church was dead and faith almost extinct, the Josiahs and the Ezras of the Hebrew time had only to bring out the Book of the Law, and Jehovah spake once more, and the people trembled before Him.

But if, in its written records, its documentary and enduring revelation, Judaism anticipated the Christian dispensation, it was a prolongation of Patriarchism in its continued use of *types* and *emblems.* There were types in Paradise: for the tree of life was an emblem of Him who grows in the midst of God's garden, and of whom partaking the soul lives for ever. There were types before the Flood: for the Sabbath is a type of the rest which remains for the people of God; and Sacrifice was a foreshadowing of that Lamb of God whose one offering should for ever take away sin. And if the Flood itself was not a type, assuredly the Ark was one, in which "the church of the saved" was rescued from a doomed world, and deposited in safety beneath the bow of God's covenant. But in the Mosaic dispensation these types grew so numerous that time would fail should we reckon the whole; those objects and observances and incidents which all had a shadow of good things to come: the High Priest, the Tabernacle, the Temple,

the Veil, the Ark of the Covenant, the Table of Shewbread, the Cities of Refuge, the Morning and Evening Sacrifice, the Day of Atonement, the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, the Law of the Leper, the Healing of Marah, the Descent of the Manna, the Smitten Rock, the Guiding Pillar, the Passage of Jordan, the Destruction of Jericho. And without descanting at present on all the advantages or drawbacks of this mode of instruction, it will be conceded that it was one well adapted to the early state of society. If it was not so precise or expository as writing, it was more arresting, and in an age when few could read it was a universal language. In fact their system of types gave the Jews the benefit of a twofold Bible. They had a written Bible and they had a pictorial Bible. They had a Bible, written on the parchment rolls, which the scribes and the scholars could read; and they had another blazing on Aaron's breastplate, and curling up in the smoke of the altar, and hovering over the mercy-seat, a Bible which the runner could read, and which the infant and peasant could spell; whilst to the Master in Israel both Bibles were patent, and the one expounded the other. For instance, if a Hebrew believer had been looking at his pictorial Bible, and the question had arisen, What mean these endless washings? what means this laver in the Temple, and this constant resorting

of the ceremonially unclean to the running river? he had only to open his written Bible and read, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Or if he had been reading in his written Bible about Jehovah's majesty or sin-excluding sanctity, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints. Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" most likely the words would make faint impression on his mind; but when he went up to the house of God, and joined the adoring company, as afar off he descried the mystic curtain and remembered that within that Shekinah dwelt which on the intrusive foot would flash instant and devouring flame,—as he marked how anxiously these Levites observed each minute prescription, and how careful was Aaron's successor not to approach the awful shrine save with incense and with blood,—he felt the force of the Psalmist's question, and his spirit was subdued to reverence. Thus did the two Bibles illustrate and interpret

one another. Thus what was dark in the type was made clear in the text, and what failed to impress in the written word struck the sense and filled the imagination in the dramatic or pictorial oracle.

XXIV.

"A Prayer of Moses, the Man of God."

"Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."—Ps. xc. 16, 17.

Although some difficulties have been started, there seems no reason to doubt that this Psalm is the composition of Moses. From the remotest period his name has been attached to it, and almost every Biblical scholar, from Jerome down to Hengstenberg, has agreed to accept it as a prayer of that "man of God" whose name it has always carried.

If so, it is one of the oldest poems in the world. Compared with it Homer and Pindar are (so to speak) modern, and even King David is of recent date. That is to say, compared with this ancient hymn the other psalms are as much more modern as Tennyson and Longfellow are more modern than Chaucer. In either case there are nearly five centuries between.

The occasion on which it was written can only be

conjectured; but from internal evidence we should say that it must have been either towards the end of the wilderness sojourn, or after that calamitous outburst which was punished by a lengthened detention in the desert, and from which it resulted that of those who were forty years old on leaving Egypt only two made out the fourscore and arrived in the land of promise (7-11).

This is enough to account for the tone of the Psalm, so pensive and plaintive. Moses himself was an exception. He had nearly made out the sixscore years, but this made him only the more lonely—the greater contrast to the youthful race which had started up around him. It gave him the feeling described by a poet of our own (Dr. Young),—

" One world deceased, another born,
Like Noah they behold,
O'er whose white hair and furrow'd brows
Too many suns have roll'd.

Happy the patriarch! he rejoiced
His second world to see;
My second world, though gay the scene,
Can boast no charms for me.

To me this brilliant age appears
With desolation spread;
Near all with whom I lived and smiled,
Whilst life was life, are dead."

And although there is every reason to believe that the new generation was an immense improvement

on its predecessor, it had the drawback of being dreadfully new. It contained no one with whom in the days of his youth the Psalmist had been acquainted. As if a flood had swept over the scene, that race had been carried completely away; and now he was left at once a spectator and a spectacle,—in the midst of a race none of whom had known him when young,—like the primeval oak or elm looking down on a whole upstart forest, and himself the venerable monument of a generation which had utterly vanished.

Nothing can be more pathetic than the middle portion—verses 3-10; nor can anything be more expressive than the imagery under which the shortness of our earthly existence is described. Compared with the years of the Eternal it is nothing. Even although the original millennium were continued—even although the thousand years of Adam and Methusaleh were still vouchsafed,—they would pass, and after they were past,—"before God's sight," compared with the years of the Eternal, they would look no more than a rapid and returnless "yesterday." Life, he says, is like "a watch in the night." The weary warrior lays him down, and he fancies that he has hardly closed his eyes—it does not look like forty winks—when he is roused to take his turn in the trenches or relieve the sentinel on the battlements, or join the forlorn-hope—the storming

party in the escalade. And like such a short "sleep" is our mortal history. We have had some pleasant dreams, and others rather frightful: when we wake up and see a ghastly apparition bending over us. "What, O Death! is that you already? It cannot possibly be time." And he answers, "Yes, indeed. The tale is told; the night is spent; and now you must turn out into the morning. Nor is it so short as you imagine. Look at the clock, and you will see that it has come to threescore and ten. Look into the mirror, and you will see that there are snows upon your head, that there are furrows on your brow, that there are crows'-feet in the corners of your eyes."

From man's mortality the Psalmist seeks refuge in God's eternity. As the first and foremost thought it begins the Psalm; and there evidently underlies it the assumption that man's immortality is involved in the immortality of God. "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations," and as at the bush Jehovah proclaimed, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,"—showing that these godly patriarchs still were extant, and still had a life in the great I AM, so from the wreck and desolation all around him, the Psalmist lifts his eyes to that true and only Potentate, who alone hath immortality. Of all the godly generations God is the eternal home. Nothing which He once blesses with His

friendship is ever blotted out of being, or is disappointed of that exceeding great reward to which He Himself has taught it to aspire. The tent is gone, but the pilgrim lives. The tent is torn and scattered amongst the elements; but the pilgrim has exchanged its frail and flimsy shelter for a house eternal. He has got better than any building made with hands, for He has passed in beneath the covert of the Almighty, and will henceforth have that home which God had for Himself before the mountains were brought forth, or ever He had formed the earth and the world.

If man be ephemeral, God is eternal. Such is the first consideration. But a second thought strikes the Psalmist. After he has depicted life's shortness he seems startled by his own description. Is it so? Is it really a dream—a sleep—a yesterday? Then how astounding is the universal delusion! what a mad mistake is this general hope that to-morrow will be as this day and much more abundant! "Lord, teach us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." On which Calvin remarks, "Children learn numbers as soon as they begin to prattle, and we do not need an arithmetical tutor to enable us to count a hundred on our fingers. So much the more shameful is our stupidity in never comprehending the short term of our life. Even the most accomplished accountant

is unable to calculate the fourscore years of his own existence. Surely it is monstrous that men can measure all distances outside of themselves. They can tell how far asunder are the several planets, and how many miles it is from the centre of the moon to the centre of the earth, but they cannot measure the threescore years and ten which divide their cradle from their grave. To do this no one is wise enough till God shines into His understanding by the Holy Spirit, and for this rare wisdom Moses now sets himself to prayer."

That prayer passes on to other points. He entreats that the period of rebuke and chastisement may now be succeeded by a season of revival and renovation. "Return, O Lord, how long [wilt Thou be angry?] and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. Oh satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil." And more especially he prays that the present juncture may be signalized by more of God's power and presence, so that before the departing generation entirely left the stage, it might have the comfort of seeing that its work was done, and that a better race was coming on. "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us;

and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it;"—a prayer in which is involved the principle that the shorter the individual existence is, it becomes all the more urgent to exert a beneficial influence on others, so as to transmit to posterity a portion of ourselves which shall thus become imperishable; and a prayer which in the instance before us was abundantly answered; for now that the murmurers were dead, now that a new generation had learned the dangers of disobedience, and been somewhat weaned from idols, it is probable that the Hebrew nation exhibited as much of the beauty of holiness as at any period of their history. Referring to this time, the Lord says, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord" (Jer. ii. 2, 3). And as this "beauty of Jehovah" was on the rising race, Moses had reason to believe that the Lord's work was appearing, and that his own work would be established; and—now that it has assumed the form of prayer, and so from man's sin and frailty has risen up into the region of Jehovah's faithfulness and love—the meditation loses all its mournfulness, and ends in a gleam of hope and gladness.

This Psalm has already furnished us with two

discourses (vers. 12 and 14), and so we shall now confine ourselves to the lesson of its closing verses.

1. You will observe a beautiful parallelism between two things which are sometimes confounded and sometimes too jealously sundered: I mean *God's agency* and *man's instrumentality,* between man's personal activity and that power of God which actuates and animates, and gives it a vital efficacy. For forty years it had been the business of Moses to bring Israel into a right state politically, morally, religiously: *that* had been *his* work. And yet, in so far as it was to have any success or enduringness, it must be God's work. "The work of our hands" do Thou establish; and this God does when, in answer to prayer, He adopts the work of His servants, and makes it His own "work," His own "glory," His own "beauty."

And so if any of you are concerned for the good of others, the secret of success and the best security for permanence is prayer. To all your efforts bring your best; throw into them all the tact and all the energy of which you are capable; bring to them the utmost of your affection, skill, and earnestness; and when you have done your best you will feel most deeply that God Himself must do it all. Here you stand seeking into the mind of this loved one admission for the gospel and for the Son of God; but you stand before a door which cannot be forced,

and it is only He that hath the key of David who can open it, and who, introducing your message, can withal enter Himself. Here is a history over whose early and critical outset you are anxious. At present it is like a rill rising on the watershed of a far inland range, and although you make every exertion to direct it into that quarter where it will flow long and illustriously and usefully, it shows a sad propensity towards those sour and swampy levels where it must be engulfed and wasted, and where it will ignobly disappear; but the heart of the youth, the heart of the child, is in the hand of the Lord, and, as a river of water, He can turn it whichever way He will; and if He will kindly interpose, from this time forward its course will be shaped aright, not perhaps so steady and so uniform as you wish, not so straight as a conduit, not so placid as the surface of a canal; a little wriggling at the first, a little noisy, a little redundant now and then; but by-and-bye gladdening the banks on either hand, and to the right course too far committed to make you fearful of its deflecting towards the desert or turning backward to the sea of death.

2. A man of piety is a man of public spirit. It is not only in the great congregation, but in secret and domestic devotion, that the man of God has at heart the cause of God, and prays, "Let thy work appear." Hitherto God has been working in the

world. His great work is that which He carries on in the souls of men, and there has never been a time when some did not experience His *work* of saving and transforming grace. But the time when God works most apparently is the time when His people pray most earnestly. This year opened with much prayer, and every successive week has brought instalments of the answer. In some of the mission fields—amongst the Karens of Burmah and the Hindus of Tinnevelly—the awaking has been wonderful; and here at home—in Wales, to some extent in London, still more in Dublin, in Glasgow, Perth, and Aberdeen, and in the fishing villages along the eastern coast, from Eyemouth to Peterhead, great numbers have been added to the Church. And with the patriotism of Moses, with the philanthropy of Christians, it behoves us to urge the prayer and with every corresponding effort emphasize the *Amen*, till God's work "appear" throughout these isles, till His way is known through all the earth, till the name of His holy child Jesus is adored by all the nations.

3. God is glorified and His work advances when His church is beautiful. "The beauty of the Lord" is the beauty of holiness,—that beauty which in the Lord Jesus himself shone with lustre so resplendent, and which ought to be repeated or reflected by every disciple. And it is towards this that all amongst us

who love the Saviour, and who long for the extension of His kingdom, should very mainly direct their endeavours. Nothing can be sadder than when preaching or personal effort is contradicted and neutralized by the low or unlovely lives of those who pass for Christians; and nothing can go further to insure success than when prayer is carried out and preaching is seconded by the pure, holy, and benevolent lives of those who seek to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Dear brethren, be this your effort. In loving meditation and affectionate communion draw near to the Lord Jesus. Draw so near that His glory will lighten upon you, and that His lineaments of grace and truth will be reflected by you. Draw so near that the beauty which for a great way round encircles Him will enclose and encompass you. And then the living evidence, the palpable demonstration will go further than a thousand arguments. The book may be shut and flung into a corner; the sermon may be forgotten, or the lay figure which was left in the pew whilst the inner man went back to the opera or took a run through his ledger,—that lay figure may never have listened to a single sentence: but when at last the day-dream dissolves, when the man is come to himself, he will say, "Yes, but it is real. There is in religion something more than forms or phrases. I have seen it. In the old disciple I have seen its

mellow grandeur,—its meek, patient, unmurmuring majesty; in the deathbed of the young believer I have seen the love of life, the fear of death, absorbed in the hope full of immortality. In that sincere and solid comrade, so pestered and so persecuted, I have seen the might of sterling principle; in that helpmeet so rallied for her scruples, and often so obstructed in her well-meant efforts, I have seen the inexhaustible long-suffering and gentleness which God bestows on those who pray for it. These are saints; for I have seen them, and they were very beautiful. O God, be merciful to me a sinner."

XXV.

The Death of Moses.

"So Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there, in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated."—DEUT. xxxiv. 5-7.

CALM and colossal, not so much distinguished by his individual features as by the mighty deeds with which he is identified, stands out the figure of that Hebrew lawgiver; and betwixt the romantic incidents of his birth and upbringing, his unparalleled achievements as the conductor of a national exodus, and his exalted function as the founder of the Hebrew commonwealth and the father of a new dispensation, no mere man has exerted a larger or more enduring influence on human history.

The end was in keeping with such illustrious antecedents. Lately we had occasion to consider the solitary false step or stumble in his public career, and nothing could more strikingly exhibit the strictness of that "schoolmaster" economy than the way in which this single offence was visited.

The eating of the forbidden fruit was hardly more fatal to Adam than was the smiting of the Rock to Moses; and even although we can see the rectitude of the dispensation, our hearts will still revert to its severity. It may be true that a significant type was spoiled by his smiting on this second occasion a rock which had been smitten once for all already, and which now needed only to be spoken to; it may be true that his spirit was provoked, and that the impression which he conveyed to the people was very different from that divine munificence and mercy which originated the miracle: yet remembering his long services and his rare consistency, and conscious as we are of our own infirmity, we are apt to share the grief and disappointment of Meribah. The sentence may be righteous, but still it is severe, and we feel deeply concerned for the leader who, after forty years of signal service, receives a rebuke so marked, and who sees vanish from his grasp that crown for which his hoary hairs so long had waited.

But if we behold the severity of God we also behold His goodness; and indeed, we may add, what was in itself so great a humiliation only brought out more strikingly the real grandeur of Moses. To err is human, and Moses erred; but to be rebuked, to be punished, and show no resentment, is a rare nobleness. This nobleness the grace of God gave to Moses, and hence it came to pass that in all his

career there is nothing grander than its ending. On the one side, mercy triumphed over judgment, and if the lawgiver had received a rebuke, that was more than compensated by the peerless distinction attending his exit. On the other side, grace triumphed over nature, and instead of wasting the time in a murmuring remonstrance or unmanly lamentations, warned by God that he was now to die, he who as a servant had been so faithful in all God's house, now bestirred himself in the final task, and for the last time set that house in order.

1. He first of all addressed the people. In that discourse, which fills the first thirty chapters of Deuteronomy, he rehearsed their history, and recapitulated those commandments and that covenant, by adhesion to which they were to become a people peculiar and Heaven-protected. In these thirty chapters we have the essence of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers; only conveyed in a tone of patriarchal affection and personal tenderness, Deuteronomy is a speech rather than a book, full of that anxious fidelity and fatherly desirousness which, knowing that it is a last opportunity, can hardly leave off, and which, after attempting to close, begin again, in the spirit of the last sentences, Deut. xxx. 15-20.

2. Then he installed his successor. Joshua, so gallant and God-fearing, and found so faithful

amidst the faithless many, in the presence of Jehovah and the people he set apart to that conquest of Canaan to which he himself had once aspired as his dearest guerdon, and the fit close of his pilgrimage: "Be strong, and of a good courage; for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. The Lord will be with thee; he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed."

3. Next into that most remarkable of all his productions, the thirty-second chapter of this book, he condensed the substance of all his warnings and entreaties, and along with them poured his own soul. Than "the song of Moses" Scripture recognises nothing as more sublime except one other composition, and with that other they only are acquainted who have received a harp of gold, and along with "the song of Moses, the servant of God," sing "the song of the Lamb." It has been well termed[1] "the Magna Charta of prophecy," and in its historical recollections and premonitory warnings, in its remonstrances and exhortations, its entreaties and regrets, and, above all, in its loyalty to Jehovah, it supplies the key-note, which we find constantly recurring in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the prophets who come after.

[1] By Eichhorn

4. And finally, as the Prophet like unto Moses began with beatitudes, so, with a blessing broad and comprehensive this type of a Mediator closed; and, with parting breath transferring them to "the eternal God as their refuge," leaving "underneath the everlasting arms," he handed to his successor the rod of office, and laid down the task of all those arduous years.

Thus much on the side of Moses. His life and his work were well wound up, and in the manner of it God was glorified. And in His gracious dealing with His servant, God glorified Himself.

Although the sentence was not literally reversed, its bitterness was greatly mitigated. Although not permitted to pass over Jordan, Moses was allowed to look over it, and, with his eye preternaturally strengthened, he got such a sight of the goodly land as days of actual exploration might have failed to give. From Nebo he looked down on the palm-trees of Jericho, close under his feet, and from the deep warm valley through which the Jordan was gleaming far across to yon boundless sea; from Jezreel, with its waving corn, to Eshcol, with its luxuriant vines; from Bashan, with its kine, to Carmel, with its rocks dropping honey; from Lebanon, with its rampart of snow, south again to the dim edge of the desert; and as he feasted his eyes, as what had so long been the land very far off, and what to the fretful host in

the wilderness had seemed no better than a myth or mirage; as the splendid domain spread out, hill and valley, field and forest, in the bright garb of spring, the Lord said, "This is the land!" "This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, I will give it to thy seed." But beautiful and overwhelming as it was, just then there began to rise on Moses' sight a still more wondrous scene. It was no longer the Jordan with its palms, but a river of water clear as crystal, and on either side of it a tree of life o'ercanopying. It was no longer Nebo's rocky summit, but a great white throne, and round it light inaccessible. He had just heard the name of Abraham, and if this is not Abraham's self! and if he is not actually in Abraham's bosom! and in a better land than the land of promise! Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see that sight. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit that better land.

"So Moses, the servant of the Lord, *died.*" The spirit was gone home. Behind that countenance, still radiant with the beatific vision, no longer worked the busy brain, no longer went and came the mind, which so long had conversed with God, and managed the affairs of a million people. Powerless is the hand which had swayed Jehovah's rod, and split the sea in sunder; and cold in its uncon-

sciousness is that majestic presence before which proud Pharaoh learned to tremble. A corpse is all that now remains of the mighty lawgiver, and there is no man there to bury him.

But the Lord is there, and in this moment of nature's helplessness and humiliation the Lord confers on His servant the crowning act of honour. As it has been described—

" By Nebo's lonely mountain,
On yon side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab
There lies a lonely grave.
And no man dug that sepulchre,
And no man saw it e'er ;
For the angels of God upturned the sod,
And laid the dead man there.

That was the grandest funeral
That ever passed on earth,
But no man heard the tramping,
Or saw the train go forth.
Noiselessly as the daylight
Comes when the night is done,
And the crimson streak on ocean's cheek
Grows into the great sun :

Noiselessly as the spring-time
Her crown of verdure weaves,
And all the trees on all the hills
Open their thousand leaves :
So, without sound of music,
Or voice of them that wept,
Silently down from the mountain's crown
The great procession swept.

Perchance the bald old eagle,
  On grey Beth-peor's height,
Out of his rocky eyrie
  Looked on the wondrous sight.
Perchance the lion stalking,
  Still shuns that hallowed spot :
For beast and bird have seen and heard
  That which man knoweth not.

But when the warrior dieth,
  His comrades in the war,
With arms reversed and muffled drum,
  Follow the funeral car.
They show the banners taken,
  They tell his battles won,
And after him lead his masterless steed,
  While peals the minute-gun.

Amid the noblest of the land
  Men lay the sage to rest,
And give the bard an honoured place
  With costly marble drest,
In the great minster transept
  Where lights like glories fall,
And the choir sings and the organ rings
  Along the emblazoned wall.

This was the bravest warrior
  That ever buckled sword ;
This the most gifted poet
  That ever breathed a word ;
And never earth's philosopher
  Traced with his golden pen
On the deathless page truth half so sage
  As he wrote down for men.

And had he not high honour ?
  The hill-side for his pall,
To lie in state while angels wait
  With stars for tapers tall,

And the dark rock-pines like tossing plumes
  Over his bier to wave,
And God's own hand in that lonely land
  To lay him in the grave :—

In that deep grave without a name,
  Whence his uncoffined clay
Shall break again—most wondrous thought!—
  Before the judgment-day ;
And stand with glory wrapped around
  On the hills he never trod,
And speak of the strife that won our life
  With the incarnate Son of God.

Oh lonely tomb in Moab's land !
  Oh dark Beth-peor's hill !
Speak to these curious hearts of ours,
  And teach them to be still.
God hath His mysteries of grace,
  Ways that we cannot tell ;
He hides them deep like the secret sleep
  Of him He loved so well."[1]

And so, my dear friends, we finish our sketch of the Life and Times of Moses. It has occupied five-and-twenty lectures, and, by way of sequel or supplement, I should like to give some day, in a single lecture, a bird's-eye view of Hebrew History, the fortunes and distinguishing features of that people on whom, in the hand of God, Moses impressed its religious and political characteristics, and the function which they have fulfilled in the world at large. In this way only can we appreciate how great the work of Moses was, when we see its re-

[1] Mrs. Alexander.

sults not only in Solomon and Daniel, in John and Paul, but all down the ages in Ben Ezra and Maimonides, in Mendelssohn and Meierbeer, in Rothschild, in Spinoza, in the minstrels who have held by the ears enraptured capitals, in the millionnaires who have carried in their pockets the peace of empires, in the philosophers who have given new problems for wit to solve, new realms for mind to conquer.

And the lessons of that life! Yes, my friends, every life has its lessons, and every good life has its example and encouragement. Even the little household lamp which shone on your table through that one short winter, now that it is out it leaves the public street no darker, but oh! so desolate as it has left your dwelling! But histories like this are suns, and age after age myriads rejoice in their light.

You are not a prophet nor a bard, nor the father of a people, and yet the life of Moses has something for you. As the honest carpenter said, "I like to read about Moses. He carried a hard business well through. A man must have courage to look at his life and think what'll come of it after he's dead and gone. A good solid bit of work *lasts;* if it's only the laying a floor down, somebody's the better for its being well done, besides the man who does it."[1] It was a hard business, but he carried it well through.

[1] *Adam Bede.* ii. 68.

You, poor widow, who have a large family to bring up and to educate—you, householder, who have many likings to consult, and many tempers to study—you, manager of your own or another's business, who have many casualties to provide for, and many cares coming on you daily, cast yourself on Him whom Moses in each emergency consulted, and depend upon it He will carry you through. The work of Moses was done in the presence of the fiery-cloudy pillar, and as conscience was in it, so immortality surrounds it; and if your work be done for God's sake, and under His eye, it will last long after you are gone.

From Moses you should learn to despair of no excellence. Many of the Bible worthies take their peculiar tint or tone from one particular grace—Job from his patience, Abraham from his faith, Nathanael from his guilelessness; but meekness is the attribute assigned to Moses. But when did he get it? He was not meek to begin with. He was not meek when he smote the Egyptian and hid him in the sand; nor would you have thought him meek when, descending the mountain at sight of the people's idolatry, he dashed in pieces the tables consecrated by the holograph of Heaven, and for the moment felt that it was no use taking further pains with such a people; and yet in order to subserve Jehovah's purpose it was needful that the temper of the leader

should become ductile as the beaten gold and elastic as the tempered steel. Seldom has the triumph been more complete. The man Moses became exceeding meek, and throughout all the sequel Meribah is the one brief outburst which interrupts the sweetness and self-control of nearly forty years. So you need not despair. In a besieged town all pains are taken to strengthen the weakest places, till at last they are often the strongest; so when the believer knows his own weakness, it will make him unhappy. This is the point against which Satan is sure to aim a surprise or muster a fierce assault, and if the town is taken the man may be lost. This sends him to prayer, and the Spirit of God builds up and strengthens where nature was weak,[1] till at the point which is the key of the entire position a tower of strength uprises. What is your besetting sin? Would it not be glorious to have it replaced by some contrary and conspicuous excellence?—the love of luxury by simplicity, self-indulgence by sobriety, cunning and finesse by straightforwardness and sincerity, dulness and earthly-mindedness by fervour and devotion? Would it not be an excellent test of the genuineness of your profession if you could bring yourself to search out the worst point and the weakest in your character, and, whatever it might be, having found it out and fixed upon it, will you go to the Rock of

[1] Isaac Williams on Old Testament Characters, p 86.

your salvation and say, "This sin is like to be my ruin. This is the point at which the enemy will come in like a flood, unless, O Spirit of the Lord, Thou lift up a standard and raise an embankment against him. Here, where I am weak, make me strong. Here, where I am defenceless, be Thou my shield and my buckler"? And would it not be to yourself most comforting, to the name of Christ and to the grace of the Spirit most honouring, if the result of felt infirmity and consequent prayer, and watchfulness consequent on that again, were, that (the weakness of the disciple bringing out the power of the Master) your natural gruffness became a Heaven-nurtured gentleness, your natural self-absorption a divinely-implanted kindness, your natural wrath and precipitancy a meekness like that which, if it cannot be learned from Moses, may be acquired from that greater Master who says, "Learn of Me, for I am meek, and you will find *rest* to your soul,"—that rest which Jesus never quitted, and into which you also will with Moses enter the moment true meekness begins.

We get one glimpse of Moses after death, and it is important, for the light it throws on the world unseen. There was one thing which Moses desired of the Lord, and sought after, and that was an entrance into the Land of Promise. But there was another thing which he sought still more expressly,

and his prayer for which also stands on record, "I beseech Thee, show me thy glory." But during his earthly existence neither desire was fully granted. From the cleft of the rock he obtained a remote and rearward view of God's glory, and from the top of Pisgah he saw the goodly land, but with the Jordan between. And then he died. He died; and there are embargos which death removes, just as there are barriers it overleaps and penalties which it pays in full. Moses died, and long ages afterwards was seen on earth again; and surely in both the time and place there was a deep significance. It was on the holy mount when the Lord Jesus was transfigured, and when He received from God the Father honour and glory. The veil that shrouds the viewless was for a moment sundered, and frail mortality could not stand it; but at home in the midst of it, and familiar with it, Moses and Elijah appeared amidst the glory, and, as if in their appropriate element, "talked" with the glorified Redeemer. And where? In the heart of that Holy Land,—on the top of one of those hills which his mortal feet were never to tread, but which may have been the frequent resort of his ransomed spirit. To meet with Moses and Elijah Jesus ascended that mountain apart, knowing that He would find them there; and the glory which startled disciples was no surprise to them, for they had been beholding the like

through all these intermediate centuries. "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory," "I pray Thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, even Lebanon." Such are the two prayers of Moses, the man of God, and he dies (you would be apt to say) with neither petition granted, with each earnest prayer unfulfilled.

But come along to Tabor, and say, what good land is this which spreads around? What goodly mountain is that which into the northern firmament rears its verdant sides and snowy pinnacle? Whose glory is this that with rapt but not unaccustomed gaze he is looking on?

And would not the Lord thus teach us that "the desire of the righteous shall be granted"? With Moses do you pray, "Show me thy glory"? Well, you shall see it. The Lord Jesus also prays, "Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," and you shall see it. "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech!" Wearied with the dry and monotonous desert, do you long for scenes fairer and more fruitful? God will show you a pure river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God, and on either side of it the tree of life, with twelve manner of fruits, and with leaves that heal the nations. Dissatisfied with the tents of sin, do you desire this one thing,—that all your days you

may dwell in the house of the Lord? Your desire shall be granted; for if you hold on, you shall become a pillar in that temple, to go no more out. Do you pant for knowledge, for broader views, deeper insight, clearer apprehension? Then you shall know even as you are known. Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Then "with the fatness of God's house you'll be well satisfied; from rivers of His pleasures He will drink for you provide."

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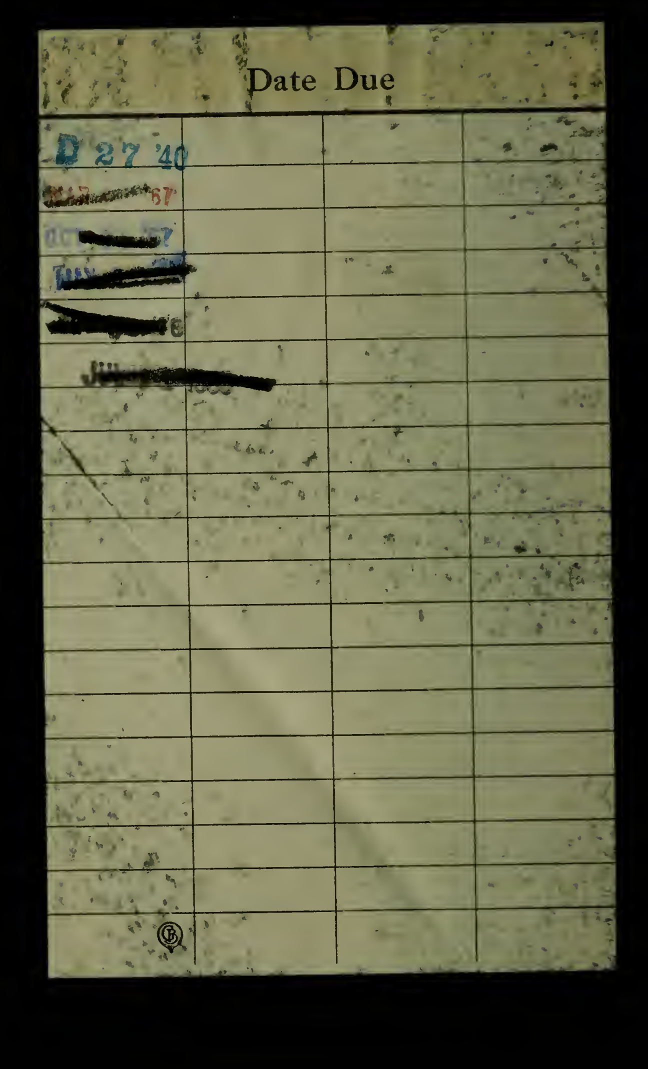
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